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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/278 and A/58/416)

Draft resolutions (A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28)

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the associated countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, as well as Iceland, a member of the European Free Trade Association that is a member of the European Economic Area, which all align themselves with this statement.

For more than half a century, the General Assembly has devoted continued, focused attention to the situation in the Middle East. Sadly, however, during that lengthy period the Middle East has remained in a state of serious crisis. As it did half a century ago, the epicentre of the crisis remains the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The European Union outlined its view on the tragic events that continue to unfold in the occupied territories during the debate on the question of Palestine. I therefore merely wish to underscore the European Union's firm belief that it is only through negotiations that a peaceful and just settlement of the conflict in the Middle East can be achieved.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the situation in the region and has noted that, despite the international community's support for the quest for a just and lasting solution, the parties concerned have not made sufficient efforts to seize opportunities for peace. In particular, it is regrettable that they have not seized the opportunity afforded by the performance-based road map indicating a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, presented by the Quartet to the parties on 30 April 2003. We therefore call once again on both parties — Israel and the Palestinian Authority — to live up to the commitments they undertook in that regard at the Aqaba Summit on 4 June 2003.

The European Union is firmly committed to the clear objective of two States — Israel and a viable and democratic Palestinian State — living side by side in peace and security, within the framework of a comprehensive Middle East peace as laid out in the road map. In that regard, the European Union welcomes and underscores the unanimous endorsement of the road map made by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003).

The European Union also urges all sides in the region to immediately implement policies conducive to dialogue and negotiation. The European Union's relations with those that take steps in a contrary direction will inevitably be affected by such behaviour.

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The European Union strongly condemns the suicide attacks and other acts of violence that have occurred over the last few months and calls on all sides to refrain from any provocative action that could further exacerbate tensions and escalate the situation. The European Union reiterates that it is the duty of all countries, including those in the region, to cease harbouring and supporting, including through fund-raising or financial assistance, any groups and individuals that use terror and violence to advance their goals. Terrorist attacks against Israel have no justification whatsoever and damage the legitimate Palestinian national cause. The European Union emphasizes once again that, in compliance with the road map, the Palestinian leadership must concretely demonstrate its determination in the fight against extremist violence and urges the Palestinian Government and the Palestinian President to take immediate steps to confront individuals and groups conducting and planning terrorist attacks. The European Union still believes that Palestinian security services should be consolidated under the control of the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister.

While recognizing Israel's right to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, the European Union once again urges the Government of Israel, in exercising that right, to fully respect international law, in particular human rights and international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, to take maximum precautions to avoid civilian casualties and to take no action that aggravates the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people. It also calls on Israel to abstain from any punitive measures that are not in accordance with international law, including extrajudicial killings.

The European Union is particularly concerned by the route marked out for the so-called security wall in the occupied West Bank. The envisaged departure of the route from the Green Line could prejudge future negotiations and make the two-State solution physically impossible to implement. In addition, it will cause further humanitarian and economic hardship to the Palestinians: thousands of Palestinians west of the wall will be cut off from essential services in the West Bank, while Palestinians east of the wall will lose access to their land and water resources. In that regard, the European Union notes with concern the findings of the Secretary-General's report on the situation (A/ES-10/248), made pursuant General Assembly resolution ES-10/13.

The European Union calls on Israel to stop and reverse its settlement policy and to immediately dismantle settlements built after March 2001. We also call on Israel to lift the blockade on the occupied territories and withdraw its forces from Palestinian cities to the positions held prior to September 2000. Moreover, Israel must ensure full, safe and unfettered access of humanitarian personnel and assistance to the occupied territories, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The European Union believes that a final peace settlement in the Middle East must be comprehensive and will not be complete without including a final Israeli peace settlement with Syria and Lebanon. We urge Israel, Syria and Lebanon to resume negotiations as soon as possible with the aim of reaching an agreement and we urge all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that damage the prospects for the peace process as a whole.

In May 2000, Israel unilaterally withdrew its forces from south Lebanon, in line with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Even though the situation there has been characterized by a state of relative calm, serious violations of the ceasefire continue to occur. It is essential that the Lebanese Government fulfil its responsibility under that resolution and reinstate its effective authority over all of southern Lebanon, including by deploying its forces along the Blue Line, in order to restore peace and security in the area. For its part, Israel must stop the repeated air violations of the Blue Line, which are unjustified and a cause of great concern to the civilian population. Furthermore, both parties must ensure the safety of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) personnel, as well as their full freedom of movement in discharging UNIFIL's mandate.

In addition to their active engagement in the Middle East peace process through the Quartet, the European Union takes a strong interest in the development of the Mediterranean region as a whole and in maintaining close and long-standing ties with its countries, as exemplified by the ongoing Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Naples. Through the Barcelona Process, the European Union aims to play its full part in ensuring peace, stability, security, as well as a sustainable and balanced

onomic and social development, in the editerraneaa region.

In conclusion, the European Union reiterates its termination to contribute to a just and lasting ttlement of the situation in the Middle East, based on ited Nations Security Council resolutions 242 967), 338 (1973) 425 (1978), 1397 (2002) and 1515 003), the terms of reference of the Madrid nference, in particular the principle of land for ace, the Arab peace initiative, endorsed at the Arab ague Summit in Beirut, and the road map presented the Quartet to the parties on 30 April 2003. In ticular, in that regard, it stresses the importance and urgency of setting up of a credible and effective rd-party monitoring mechanism composed of all mbers of the Quartet.

Ms. Knowles (Australia): When Australia spoke t year on this item the situation in the Middle East s grim. We began our statement by expressing my vernment's condolences to the peoples of Kenya and ael, following the terrible terrorist attacks in mbasa. We all hoped then that by now reason would e prevailed and that we might have seen an end to h barbarous acts.

But this year we again have to express the stralian Government's deepest condolences — this e to the Governments and peoples of Turkey and di Arabia — for the deplorable attacks in Istanbul Riyadh in the past month. An Australian citizen s among the dead in Turkey. In October, Australia, onesia and other countries marked the first iversary of the 2002 Bali bombings. Those alling acts have been rightly condemned by ernments around the world and here in the United tions. It is imperative that we work together fsively to eradicate the scourge of terrorism, but is not the only cause for concern in the Middle t.

Australia is one of a large coalition of countries porting rehabilitation and stabilization efforts in . Addressing Saddam's legacy of oppression and se is a major challenge. There are also groups that stop at nothing to impede Iraq's transition to a ocratic, peaceful and prosperous nation — as the nt deaths of Spanish and Japanese officials sadly onstrate. However, it is not all bad news from Iraq. dy progress is being made on rehabilitation, Iraqis increasingly taking responsibility for their security, and a new timetable has been agreed that will accelerate the return of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. Australia and its coalition partners are determined to stay the course in Iraq.

Recently, the international community has been faced with the need to address revelations of the extent of Iran's previously undeclared nuclear activities. Australia welcomes the adoption by consensus on 26 November by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of a resolution on Iran's nuclear programme. The resolution acknowledges positively Iran's 21 October promises of full cooperation with IAEA, suspension of uranium enrichment and reprocessing and signature and immediate adherence to a safeguards-strengthening Additional Protocol. The resolution also calls on Iran to take corrective measures and cooperate fully with IAEA. It is in the interests of both Iran and the non-proliferation regime that Iran heed that clear message.

Australia has consistently supported efforts to resolve the tragic Israeli-Palestinian dispute. There can be no military solution to the conflict, just as there is no alternative to a negotiated settlement. While we are strongly committed to Israel's right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, Australia has also consistently supported the emergence of a viable Palestinian State living at peace with its neighbour Israel. Our position is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace.

Australia is a strong supporter of the road map to Middle East peace and we therefore welcome Security Council resolution 1515 (2003). We call on both sides to return to negotiations and resume implementation of the road map without delay. The road map sets out the path to Palestinian statehood. To realize that legitimate aspiration, however, the Palestinian Authority must take firm action to end the violence.

The situation in the Middle East today presents a major challenge for its inhabitants and the wider international community. Let us not give in to the fatal temptation of seeing terrorist acts, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other calamities as inevitable. It is now more important than ever that the international community and the United Nations work together to overcome the destructive forces in the Middle East and build a better future for all its peoples.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For more than half a century the situation in the Middle East has remained the focus of intense United Nations attention. Regrettably, during that time we have not been able to achieve a just and lasting settlement in the region. The outcome this year again continues to be ongoing tensions in the Palestinian-Israeli crisis and in general a difficult atmosphere in the relations between Israel and the Arab States. As a result, past gains acquired in the Middle East peace process have been lost and it has become increasingly difficult to resume negotiations. Moreover, there were fears of an emerging regionalization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which could spill over to other States.

Given that situation, Russia calls on the Palestinians and Israelis to take immediate steps towards the easing of tensions and resumption of negotiations on political and security issues. We anticipate that the parties will be able to establish a high-level political dialogue, place the situation in a non-confrontational context and move towards the normalization of relations.

We are confident that the path to that goal lies in the unswerving implementation by the parties of the road map drafted by the Quartet — that is, Russia, the United States of America, the European Union and the United Nations — as adopted by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003). Above all the Palestinian Authority needs to take effective measures to end acts by extremists and terrorists, who have killed peaceful civilians. Israel, for its part, must refrain from the disproportionate use of force and extrajudicial killings and take effective steps to ease the economic burden of the Palestinian people, who have been beset by a deep humanitarian disaster. Israel's practice of building settlements in the occupied territories and their construction of a separation wall on that territory continue to present serious impediments to a settlement.

Thus, by taking those types of parallel steps, the Palestinians and the Israelis will necessarily build up their respective capacities for mutual trust, opening the door to achieving the strategic goal — a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the principles of the Madrid Conference and previously reached agreements. That presupposes, of course, the resumption of talks on all tracks, including with Syria and Lebanon.

That approach also requires stepping up multilateral efforts with effective assistance from the United Nations. Russia, as a member of the Quartet, will continue to actively contribute to improving the situation in the Middle East, working to that end with the United Nations, the United States and the European Union, as well as the Arab countries, in seeking a final settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of a two-State solution, with a Palestinian State and Israel living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. Russia is sincerely interested in achieving specifically that type of settlement — one which would strengthen security and stability throughout the Middle East region and enable all its inhabitants to develop in an atmosphere of stability and good-neighbourliness.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is debating one of the most important items on its agenda because it is closely linked to international peace and security. Despite its vitality and importance, for many decades the Middle East has not enjoyed stability, because of the wars that have befallen it — bleeding its peoples and States of their capabilities, potential and resources.

Perhaps the gravest difficulty the region faces — the gravest threat to its peace and security — is the intransigent stance of the Israeli Government in pursuing illegal policies and practices and its refusal to respond to peace initiatives. Israel continues to create further obstacles for international initiatives aimed at finding a just, comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Israeli Government, under Sharon, has taken an approach based on the use of force to impose security, as it continues to occupy Arab and Palestinian lands. That equation has been proved by events to be a failure. Its continuation will only lead to further deterioration in the economic, security and political situation in the region. The Israeli Government must realize that violence merely generates violence and that Israeli policies and practices based on imposing a status quo on the ground must end if Israel truly wishes the peace that we all long for.

It is not reasonable that the international community should be swayed by the pretexts and manoeuvres fabricated by Israel — time and again using the excuse that it needs to maintain its security — while its fundamental objective is to

distance us from a consideration of the crux of the conflict, which is the continuing occupation.

Israel rejected the Arab peace initiative adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut last year, which was welcomed by the international community. Israel registered 14 reservations to the road map, which was formulated by the Quartet and was widely supported by the international community and recently endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515 (2003).

Israel did not stop at rejecting each and every initiative. Israel feverishly attempts to consolidate its occupation of Palestinian lands and to escalate the situation through continuing raids inside the West Bank and Gaza. Israel has reoccupied areas under the Palestinian Authority and continues to build settlements, to expropriate land, to demolish homes and to practice a policy of assassination of Palestinian leaders. It continues to lay siege to the occupied territories, thus escalating the suffering of the Palestinian people and contributing to a decline in their standard of living, as more than 60 per cent of them live below poverty level.

Israel knows full well that its policies and practices have been condemned by the international community for running counter to international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. Israel, however, obstinately refuses to heed that condemnation. It continues to build a wall inside the Palestinian territories, which, if not stopped, will be an obstacle to reaching a peaceful settlement leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed that position in his report to the General Assembly on the separation wall (A/ES-10/248). The continued construction of the wall in clear defiance of the wishes of the international community and United Nations resolutions proves that Israel continues to pursue a policy of fait accompli and is not taking any steps to build Palestinian confidence in Israeli actions.

International reports show that the wall not only expropriates Palestinian lands, indeed, it will isolate Palestinian areas from each other and prevent the movement of civilians to their farms, schools and work.

Kuwait strongly condemns all acts of violence and barbaric practices by the Israeli Government against the Palestinians. We call on the Israeli Government to cease its policies of killing and economic siege and settlement expansion, which only lead to further despair and frustration among the Palestinian people. All Israeli practices, beginning with the occupation of Arab land in Palestine, the Syrian Golan and the continuing threats to the sovereignty of Lebanon, as well as the bloody campaign that is being waged against the Palestinian people, are all clear violations of the principles of international law, United Nations resolutions, international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Kuwait calls on the Security Council to shoulder the international responsibilities entrusted to it by the United Nations Charter and to impose its will on the Israeli Government to respect its resolutions on the matter and to find a means or mechanism to provide protection to the Palestinians.

We stress the importance for the United Nations to continue in its central role in finding a solution to the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict in all aspects, since this is a permanent responsibility of the United Nations, as provided for in all resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). We call on the United Nations to continue its peacemaking efforts to end the current tragic situation and to resume negotiations towards a comprehensive peace settlement on all tracks. In this regard, Kuwait welcomes the efforts of the Quartet that led to the formulation of the road map. We hope that, following the Security Council's endorsement of the road map in resolution 1515 (2003), a mechanism will be found for all concerned parties to implement all its provisions.

Kuwait will continue to support the Palestinian people until they obtain the right to self-determination and create their own independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

In addition, we renew our call for Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967 in implementation of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 497 (1981). We also stress the illegal nature of all Israeli practices in the Golan and we call on Israel to resume negotiations at the point at which they were left off and to respect all commitments made in pervious agreements.

As for the concerns of our brothers in Lebanon, Kuwait continues to support their just demands. We call on Israel to withdraw from all Lebanese territories in accordance with resolution 425 (1978) and to cease all threats to the sovereignty and security of Lebanon.

In conclusion, the Israeli Government must realize that achieving security is a principal demand and the right of all peoples and States of the region, and is not exclusive to Israel. Security cannot be ensured through violence and hatred against Arabs and Muslims or by inventing pretexts to continue occupying land. We must learn from the lessons of the past. Therefore we support the statement by the Secretary-General in his latest report (A/ES-10/248) that, after many years of bloodshed, dislocation and suffering, it must be clear to all of us, as well as to the parties, that the security of Palestinian and Israeli together can only be obtained through a just, peaceful, comprehensive and durable settlement based on resolutions of international legitimacy.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): We align ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union on this agenda item. I would, however, now like to expound on some of our views on this subject.

As a region where peace and prosperity endured for centuries and where civilizations were born, the Middle East is not condemned to eternal strife. The manifold problems that beset this region should be addressed from a comprehensive perspective, and the international community should spare no efforts in its contribution to this effort. It is increasingly evident that the dynamics of the confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians need to be redirected towards a genuine search for reconciliation. Indeed, the Palestinians and the people of Israel have suffered long enough, and neither of them deserves to live without real prospects for a peaceful future. As much as the leaders of both sides have a responsibility to bring long-desired peace to their peoples, so the international community has a responsibility to encourage the parties to move towards genuine dialogue and negotiations.

Unfortunately, despite all efforts and new mechanisms, the world has witnessed an unrelenting cycle of violence and terrorism during the past few years, which has taken all constructive initiatives hostage. In fact, the aggression between Israel and the Palestinians, which frequently spins out of control in the form of terrorist attacks and harsh retaliations, brings nothing but unspeakable despair and suffering to both peoples.

We have always strongly and unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism and violence perpetrated against the Israelis and reminded the Palestinian Authority of its responsibility to take all necessary measures to halt violence. On the other hand, Turkey has also called on the Government of Israel to reconsider its methods of fighting terrorism.

We fully comprehend the security concerns of Israel. However, we have serious misgivings about the ongoing construction of the separation wall, or security fence, which has already exacerbated the dire living conditions of the Palestinians. We have reason to worry that this will also prejudice the two State solution. In our view, establishing security is, indeed, of paramount importance, but it is not the single most important objective. For instance, there is no doubt that every tangible improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinian people would be reflected positively in the security situation on the ground.

It is now time for the parties to break this repetitious and vicious cycle and pool their energies and determination to commit themselves to genuine dialogue.

The newly formed Government of the Palestinian Authority provides an opportunity to give much-needed impetus to the peace process. In this framework, the Quartet road map remains the most important document for breaking the current stalemate between the parties. A comprehensive settlement can only be achieved if both sides effectively implement with determination their respective obligations under the road map. As manifested by the recently adopted Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), the international community has already shown its resolve to help the parties in this direction.

Delaying settlement of the conflict widens despair and desolation. This, in turn, strengthens radicalism in the region and expands the breeding ground from which terrorists are recruited to a global scale.

We must also not overlook the significance of the other tracks in the stalled peace process. They are indispensable for a comprehensive settlement.

Turkey supports the recent initiative to streamline the work of the Fourth Committee and reduce the number of resolutions under the relevant agenda items regarding the Middle East. On the other hand, we believe that any change in the established approach should, first and foremost, be fully acceptable to the side directly concerned, that is, in this case, the Palestinian side.

As a final point, I would like to commend Mr. Peter Hansen and his team for their tireless efforts and accomplishments and reiterate my Government's support and commitment for the important humanitarian work being carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the region.

Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): This is the third consecutive year in which the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has deteriorated and worsened as a result of continued illegal Israeli activities against the Palestinian people and the continuation of violence. In spite of the difficulties on the ground, we still believe in the ability of the Palestinian side and the moderates on the Israeli side to achieve peace.

Jordan has diligently worked at all levels for a just and comprehensive solution that would achieve peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002), the principle of land-for-peace, the Arab peace initiative and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which is the basis for finding a solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees. Jordan also continues to support all efforts to give momentum to the political track and implement the road map that was launched at the Aqaba summit in June 2003. We reiterate the importance of taking serious steps to implement the road map and put the peace process back on track, steps that would guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish their own viable Palestinian State that would exist peacefully side by side with Israel.

My delegation has made its position clear before the Fourth Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, during discussions on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly with regard to illegal Israeli practices against the Palestinian people and Israel's repeated violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We have also made clear the position of our Government with regard to the issue of Palestinian refugees and the importance of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948. Permit me to make a few additional points directly related to the future of the peace process.

The road map, to which Jordan has contributed, provides the necessary means to end the Israeli occupation, establish the Palestinian State and realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Based upon that, we welcomed the recent Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), which calls on all parties to implement the road map. Now that the international community has endorsed the road map, which has been accepted by both the Israeli and Palestinian parties, its implementation requires the genuine political will to achieve the final objective, namely, the two-State solution, which has been envisioned by the United States President.

Recently we witnessed an informal positive move in the Geneva Accord, which provides the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as the international community, a model for a final resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based upon international legitimacy, and provides the possibility of such a solution.

On the other hand, we would like to stress that the appointment of a new Palestinian Government and Prime Minister gives hope to the political process. We welcome the undertakings by the Palestinian Prime Minister and his readiness to activate the peace process. However, that requires the international community to provide full support to the Palestinian Prime Minister and his team so as to enable them to implement their commitments under the road map. We also would like to call on Israel to implement its commitments under the road map and work to build confidence with the new Palestinian Government so as to enable it to fulfil its commitments as well. The establishment of a monitoring mechanism by the Quartet is essential to the success of all parties in the implementation of the road map.

In spite of some positive indications lately, of the resumption of the political process, Israel's settler policies and its continuing construction of the separation wall run counter to all efforts towards peace. Those policies have been futile since the moment they were conceived and have failed to realize their declared objective, namely, to provide security for the Israelis.

Furthermore, construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories represents a violation of the principles of international law, threatens the peace process and prevents the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian State on the territories occupied since 4 June 1967. That wall imposes a fait accompli on the ground and its construction should cease immediately, at least within the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's continuation of its settler policies overshadows its intentions for peace. We call on Israel to cease all forms of settler activity and to dismantle the settlements that were erected after April 2001, in a manner commensurate with its responsibilities under the first phase of the road map, as an essential element to building confidence between the two parties. We are also awaiting Israel's implementation of its latest commitment to dismantle settlements encircling the Gaza Strip.

Further work should be done to put an end to the activities of extremists on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and to put an end to all forms of violence, including crimes that are being committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Everyone in the region must be convinced that exclusive security policies, murder, destruction and the building of walls and other obstacles in order to separate one people from another, will achieve neither peace nor security.

We also would like to reiterate the clear position of the Jordanian Government regarding suicide activities against civilians from both moral and political perspectives. Not only do those activities cause the death of innocent civilians, which is condemned and rejected by us, but they also harm the Palestinian cause and the peace process.

Termination of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy and the achievement of the two-State solution through implementation of the road map are the only means to guarantee peace, stability and security in a region whose peoples look forward to the day when they can live in dignity, far from violence, killing and humiliation.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The debate on agenda item 37 on the situation in the Middle East comes at a moment of impasse and the absence of any negotiations towards the search for peace, amidst sporadic outbreaks of violence. No signs are to be seen anywhere of the possibility of entering into constructive and serious dialogue that could lead to a just and lasting peace that would benefit, first and foremost, all the peoples in the region, and thus, all humankind.

The ongoing deadly cycle of violence and reprisals has exacerbated political tensions and has taken an unprecedented toll in dead and wounded in recent months, most of them innocent civilians, including a considerable number of children. By the same token, we must take into account the tens of thousands of families mourning the loss of their loved ones and living in precarious conditions, constantly threatened with death and destruction. Violence, destruction and the use of military force can never in any way bring about a definitive solution to this conflict.

Fifty-six years ago, the Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which recognized the partition of and advocated the creation of two independent States, one Arab and one Jewish, which were to coexist in peace and harmony. This has not yet been fulfilled owing to the fact that, although the State of Israel was created in 1948, the creation of the State of Palestine still remains a pending issue.

The scenario before us is as follows.

Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese Arab territories are still illegally occupied by Israel, in flagrant violation of the numerous resolutions of this Assembly and the Security Council demanding the immediate return of those territories.

The Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and to the creation of their own independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, has yet to be respected.

Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories continue to expand, especially in the West Bank and in the surroundings of East Jerusalem, despite the demands of the international community to put an end to the establishment of new settlements, the confiscation of lands and the construction of the wall of separation. This wall represents, among other things, the virtual annexation of 16 per cent of the occupied Palestinian territories.

There is still no definitive solution to the deplorable situation of the approximately four million Palestinian refugees, both in and outside the occupied territories. This continues to be one of the issues on

which no progress has been made during the peace process negotiations that began in Madrid more than a decade ago.

The aggression perpetrated against the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Israeli air force a few weeks ago, condemned by the vast majority of the international community, reminds us of the latent threat of a military escalation in the region. This threat cannot be disregarded as long as we remain far from the path of good-neighbourliness and pacific coexistence among nations.

The United Nations is faced with one of the most difficult tasks that has faced it virtually since its inception. It is embarrassing that the Security Council remains hostage to the dictates of one Power that uses its veto or the threat of the veto to prevent the practical implementation of the Council's own resolutions.

As the Secretary-General noted in the observations included in his report (A/58/416), what is needed is a definite and peaceful settlement of the issue of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to achieve a broad, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, without disregarding the need for progress on the Syrian and Lebanese issues.

Likewise, we cannot set aside the concept reflected in the preambular section of Security Council resolution 1397 of 12 March 2002, which supports the existence in the Middle East of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

Israel must end its occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan Heights and the areas of southern Lebanon that remain under the control of the Israeli army.

All Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the situation in the Middle East must be fully complied with, without exception or discrimination, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

We should move forward on adopting more effective measures on the ground. One of these could be the deployment of an international force under the mandate of the United Nations to protect the civilian Palestinian population.

The United Nations must play an effective and genuinely impartial role in any negotiating process undertaken, without any interference deemed unacceptable by the parties, so that they can recover their confidence in the mediators.

In pursuing these efforts for achieving peace — as necessary as they are urgent — the international community can rely, as always, on Cuba's constructive contribution and its firm support and solidarity.

In this regard, my delegation calls on the Assembly to vote in favour of the two draft resolutions submitted this morning (A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28), which stress that the road towards peace in the Middle East is that of understanding and not of confrontation.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): The international community witnessed the acceptance of the road map by both the Israeli and Palestinian sides last spring, as well as the subsequent summit meeting held at Aqaba, and thus hoped that the long-awaited opportunity for fundamental progress on Middle East peace had finally come. However, the process has remained adrift since August, when conditions suddenly deteriorated again.

Now that the new cabinet of the Palestinian Authority has been formed under the new Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, the expectation that the implementation of the road map will resume has been heightened. Japan shares that expectation. Nevertheless, since we observed with great disappointment the rapid evaporation of the high hopes of six months ago, we cannot but take a cautious view of this progress, while welcoming the recent positive events. Even if the prospects for the Palestine track have not faded away entirely, the situation is now such that enormous efforts on both sides will be required for the prospects to brighten again.

Fortunately, many of those concerned have expressed their intention to reinitiate serious efforts towards progress, which we find encouraging.

First, Japan welcomes the fact that Prime Minister Qurei and Prime Minister Sharon have expressed their readiness to meet directly to resume implementation of the road map.

We also commend the United States Government for its continued commitment to the implementation of the road map and to working on persuading both parties, particularly Israel, to make renewed efforts in this regard. This involvement of the United States is

indispensable for achieving peace. In addition, we appreciate and strongly support the efforts of the Egyptian Government in serving as an intermediary in order to once again effect a ceasefire among the Palestinian factions.

Japan also welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), which we hope will add momentum to the search for peace.

Furthermore, we welcome the formal announcement of the Geneva initiative yesterday, since such an initiative provides hope for peace. We trust that this achievement will enjoy the broad support of the international community, including the parties to the conflict. All of the aforementioned efforts are positive and may be of help in improving the situation.

However, a serious question remains to be answered: if all these efforts bear fruit immediately, will that be sufficient to convince the Israeli and Palestinian people and world opinion that both parties have returned to the road map, which is the only viable plan for peace?

Regrettably, I am afraid, the answer is no. As long as the Palestinian Authority's actions against the extremists fail to yield results and the Israeli Government continues its settlement activities and its construction of a wall that crosses the Green Line, it will be difficult for mere words expressing a sincere commitment to achieving peace through the road map to be accepted. As long as both sides continue to insist either that the Palestinian side has to act first, or that the Israelis must first show good faith, peace will never be achieved. What is indispensable is courageous and insightful action by both parties.

Concerned Member States, including Japan, have repeatedly appealed for strong action by the Palestinian Authority against the extremists and for the termination of the settlement activities and of the construction of the wall beyond the Green Line by the Israeli Government. At the Security Council and here at the General Assembly appeals have repeatedly been made through statements and voting actions. Member States have also appealed bilaterally to the parties. Whether the parties have actually listened to these appeals and taken them to heart is doubtful, to say the least.

Let me make myself clear: Japan genuinely wishes that peace be realized in the Middle East; but, even if our appeals are unfortunately ignored by the parties, Japan will neither lose interest in the peace process nor end its support for peace efforts by the parties that are accompanied by concrete action. But in spite of that — or, rather, precisely because of that — I wish to ask both parties to stop and think about the significance of the fact that so many repeated and unanimous appeals for peace have been made by the international community.

I also wish to ask both parties to consider this: even after their commitment to the road map has been accepted as credible as a result of concrete actions by both parties toward peace, that credibility will not have been established once and for all, but will have to be tested many times over until peace is finally achieved. In other words, unless both parties are truly committed to the vision of two States living side by side in peace, a crisis of credibility may arise at any time.

The Government of Japan has extended support of various kinds to promote Middle East peace, such as humanitarian relief for the Palestinian people and reform assistance for the Palestinian Authority. One example of such assistance is the sponsorship of the confidence-building meeting that was held in Tokyo in May this year. This meeting was organized on the basis of our belief that, in order to achieve peace through dialogue and negotiation, there must be some level of confidence between the parties. As long as both parties understand the importance of confidence-building and are serious about pursuing that goal, we intend to continue our support of the process with perseverance. But in order for our support to make any sense, it is essential that both parties recognize the importance of such confidence-building and make an earnest effort to promote it.

It goes without saying that, to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East, we need to seek a comprehensive peace. Therefore, on the Syria-Lebanon track as well, we believe that if the parties shared an interest in seeking peace and worked to build mutual confidence upon the foundation of that shared interest, it would be beneficial for the resumption and future progress of peace negotiations for the Middle East.

Are we now facing opportunity and hope, or crisis and despair? I would like to reply that we face opportunity and hope. But the source of the power to transform such opportunity and hope into reality, if it exists, can only be found with the parties to the Middle East conflict themselves. Only in the presence of the

strong will of all parties to pursue peace, and the strength to make concessions and fulfil responsibilities for the sake of the ultimate goal of peace, can support from the international community be effective.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge once again all parties to the conflict to uphold their determination to pursue peace. Peace in the Middle East is directly connected to the peace and security of the entire world. As long as the parties respond to our appeal in good faith, the international community always stands ready to extend support for its progress.

Mr. Ndekhedehe (Nigeria): The situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate and remains one of the most intractable problems on the agenda of the United Nations. Nigeria considers it a matter of regret that the cycle of strife, violence and instability persists, despite the collective efforts of the international community. Nigeria therefore condemns the spate of violence between the two parties.

Actions of violence and counter-violence are clear violations of the Madrid and Oslo accords and the international community cannot and should not allow this wanton destruction of lives and property to continue. All the parties and factions must realize that nothing meaningful or durable is ever attained through violence.

Nigeria believes that a just and lasting solution to the thorny question of a Palestinian State existing side by side with the State of Israel must be the basis for the establishment of sustainable peace in the Middle East, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). We note the recent pledge by Mr. Yasser Arafat, recognizing the right of Israel to live side by side in peace with Palestine within secure borders. We therefore urge the parties to back the pronouncements of peace, reconciliation and harmony with concrete action that will ensure sustainable peace in the region.

Nigeria is committed to a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict and we call upon the parties to resume the peace process and move towards a lasting peace. Consequently, Nigeria, as it has done in previous years, calls on this Assembly to address the security concerns of the State of Israel, as well as the concerns of the Palestinian people.

Regarding the Syrian Golan Heights, we call on the parties to adopt flexible policies and resume peace negotiations under the principle of land for peace which, in our view, will guarantee long-term peace and security in the region. In this regard, Nigeria reaffirms its support for resolutions 56/31, 56/32, 57/111 and 57/128 on Jerusalem and Syrian Golan, as well as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 478 (1980).

On the issue of Lebanon, Nigeria notes that there has been some progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), following Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon. This has brought some degree of stability to Sheba'a Farms. The relative peace along the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon should be maintained and should not be violated by any of the parties.

Nigeria believes that the situation in the Middle East calls for compromise by all the parties pursuant to Security Council resolution 338 (1973). Accordingly, Nigeria will continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General in favour of the presence of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the region and we welcome the agreement between Syria and Israel in this regard.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Nigeria believes in the vision and engagement of the Quartet to fashion out an acceptable peace agreement for the region. We support Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) and call on the parties to fulfil their obligations under the plan, in cooperation with the Quartet. Nigeria also supports the call by the Secretary-General for the establishment of a third-party mechanism to end violence and foster progress in the Middle East. Similarly, we endorse the idea of holding an international conference, as presented by the Secretary-General last year.

Nigeria commends the efforts of the President of the United States of America in bringing together the parties in the ongoing efforts to implement of the road map. We call on the parties to heed the advice of people of goodwill, abandon violence and pursue the peace process with sincerity. Accordingly, we support the vision of two States — the State of Israel, living within secure and recognized borders, and an independent, viable Palestine, both living side by side in peace and security, as affirmed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

Nigeria welcomes the Geneva accord signed yesterday by prominent Israelis and Palestinians, which outlines comprehensive and detailed steps to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that such a private initiative, while not a substitute for official diplomatic negotiations between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, should be commended and encouraged.

Nigeria also wishes to reiterate its commitment to the ultimate goal of a negotiated peace between Israel and Lebanon, on the one hand, and Israel and Syria, on the other, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We further reaffirm our support for the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was endorsed by the summit of the League of Arab States in March 2002; the Madrid accord of 2001; and the principle of land for peace.

In conclusion, Nigeria commends the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in the region. We also commend the men and women who have served and are serving with UNDOF and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for their courage and commitment to the cause of international peace and security.

Mr. Jatoi (Pakistan): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on agenda items 37 and 38.

As in the past, the reports indicate a systematic pattern of unchecked violation of international humanitarian law and the ongoing deterioration of the political and security situation in the Middle East. Earlier this year, the adoption of the road map rekindled hope for a meaningful dialogue amongst the concerned parties, leading to the establishment of two independent States in the Middle East and thus putting an end to a long-standing dispute in the most volatile region of the world. However, violence has since resurged against unarmed civilians in the occupied territories, putting the process initiated after the adoption of the road map into the doldrums.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's reports, the actions and practices of the occupation forces are in contravention of legal instruments pertaining to the situation of the people living in the occupied territories, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Fourth Geneva Convention prescribes specific obligations for an occupying Power in relation to the people living in occupied territories, described as "protected persons". The Convention prohibits the occupying Power from wilfully killing, ill-treating and deporting protected people. The report mentions frequent resort to all such practices, which have resulted in over 2,800 killings among Palestinians and of three civilian United Nations staff members.

A fundamental principle of international law flowing from the United Nations Charter is the illegality of the acquisition of territory by use of force. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and all subsequent international agreements on the Middle East have been based on this principle. The Quartet's peace plan is also based on the principle of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories in exchange for durable peace.

However, the continued settlement activity in the occupied territories, including the building of a separation wall, negates all agreed principles. Besides being illegal, all these activities entail enormous humanitarian suffering for the affected Palestinian people and seriously undermine the prospects for a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute. The Secretary-General earlier described the separation wall and the settlements as serious obstacles to the achievement of a two-State solution. If remained unchecked, these activities would present the world irreversible faits accomplis, even before the final settlement under the road map.

The occupation forces often argue that their actions are necessary to fight terrorism and enhance security. It is difficult to agree with this contention. Security cannot be enhanced by intensifying repression and coercion. Instead, genuine security will flow only from Israel's accepting the right of the occupied people to uphold their separate identity and to exercise their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination.

Each member of the General Assembly has a stake in peace in the Holy Land on the basis of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and of Crown Prince Abdullah's peace plan. One viable way to achieve peace is the full and faithful implementation of the road map, which promotes the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders. It is our hope that the international community will remain engaged

with the concerned parties for the expeditious realization of this vision.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Over the past year, the situation in the Middle East has experienced much turbulence. The official launching of the road map had once brought new opportunities to the Israel-Palestine peace process. Later, regrettably, there have arisen serious differences on how to implement the road map between Israel and Palestine. To make things worse, there have been incessant violent clashes between the two sides, which have not only led to huge loss of life and property and cast a shadow over the peace process, but also seriously threaten regional security and stability.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East situation. The issue of whether the Palestinian people can enjoy their legitimate national rights is the key to a comprehensive and reasonable settlement of the Middle East question. The history of Israel-Palestine conflicts shows that the only correct choice for realizing lasting peace in the entire Middle East is to settle disputes through political talks. Countering violence with violence will only deepen the mutual hatred. It neither conduces to the Palestinians' noble objective of founding their own State, nor helps to ensure Israel's security.

Recently, the new Government of Palestine was formally established and a Security Council resolution endorsing the road map adopted. The international conference held yesterday on the Geneva initiative reflected the strong desire for peace of Palestinians and Israelis alike. All of these developments have created favourable conditions for breaking the deadlock in the Israel-Palestine peace talks and for easing the situation between them. We urge Israel and Palestine to seize the opportunity, resume peace talks as soon as possible and restart the implementation of the road map. The international community should also intensify its efforts to promote the peace process.

Achieving a comprehensive peace throughout the Middle East will not be possible unless appropriate solutions can be found to the disputes between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel. We hope to see early and meaningful talks between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel, aimed at finding mutually acceptable solutions based on the principles of the Madrid Conference.

The United Nations shoulders major responsibilities in maintaining world and regional peace and security and should therefore play its due role on the Middle East question. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace have laid a solid foundation for a political settlement of the Middle East question and are important guidelines for moving the Middle East peace process ahead on the right track.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has closely followed developments in the Middle East and played an active part in promoting the Middle East peace process. In mid-December this year, an Asian-Pacific meeting on the question of Palestine will be held under United Nations auspices in Beijing. We will, as always, continue to support the efforts for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Middle East question. We are ready to work with the rest of the international community and to continue to make our own contributions to that end.

Mr. Nambiar (India): It has been over three years since the current phase of unrest and violence in the Middle East began. Since then, almost 4,000 Israelis and Palestinians have lost their lives in the raging conflict, to which most have not been party. Many others have been wounded or have lost their livelihoods and economic sustenance. The volatile situation has greatly exacerbated tensions in the region and elsewhere, contributing to a general sense of insecurity worldwide.

Along with the rest of the international community, India has held that both the Israeli and Palestinian sides must eschew violence and work towards a negotiated political settlement to the conflict. We have pointed out that the longer the conflict endures and the more intractable positions become, the harder it will be for the sides to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution.

The promises of a new start to a peace initiative launched at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit in June 2003 were all too quickly extinguished by the actions of vested interests against any move towards peace in the Middle East. As a result, since last August the situation has been characterized by a dangerous spiral of violence and retribution.

In a recent briefing to the Security Council, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast pointed out that the peace process could

not be allowed to remain stalled, as in "such a dangerous environment, continued inertia could be deadly" (*S/PV.4861, p. 2*). Indeed, the absence of any political dialogue or initiative by the international community to restore the two sides on the path towards a political process has been a matter of great concern.

Fortunately, there has been a period of relative calm in the region over the past month-and-a-half. That, as well as the prospects of a meeting between the Prime Ministers of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, have given rise to some optimism. The Secretary-General, in his address on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, referred to these positive indications as "tender shoots" that "must be nourished" (*SG/SM/9037*). However small that opening may appear, the international community must urge the parties to exploit it for the sake of their peoples and for posterity.

The recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) endorsing the Quartet performance-based road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a step in the right direction. The Quartet must, with the backing of other concerned parties, move quickly to capitalize on the positive dynamics created by this period of relative calm. We hope that it will be helped in that effort by the positive environment created by the election of the new Palestinian Prime Minister and the gathering momentum of public support for the resumption of a political process.

India supports the Quartet road map as the only viable process that can promote a peaceful solution to the conflict. We call upon the parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map. The Palestinian Authority is required to give concrete content to its declared intent of establishing law and order, controlling violence and combating terrorism. Israel, on its part, should take immediate steps to build confidence by easing closures, removing settlement outposts, freezing settlement activity and halting the construction of the separation wall.

The Secretary-General, in his report, has referred to the construction of that barrier on occupied Palestinian land as "a deeply counterproductive act" (*A/ES-10/248, p. 7*). He has drawn attention to the fact that, in places, the wall deviates by more than 7.5 kilometres, and in its planned route by up to 22 kilometres, from the Green Line to incorporate Israeli settlements while encircling Palestinian areas.

India has stated before in this Assembly that, while we fully understand the legitimate right of all States to exercise self-defence, Israel's decision to construct such a wall in the occupied territories cannot be justified and must be reviewed. Not only would it cause socio-economic harm to the Palestinian people, but it is likely to impair future negotiations. The construction of the wall must not become an attempt to predetermine the outcome of any final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It must not impact adversely on the principle of land for peace called for in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

While saying this, India strongly condemns all acts of terrorism and violence. There can be no justification whatsoever for terrorism. Where these terrorist attacks are directed against unarmed civilians, women and children — what the Secretary-General has referred to as acts of wanton and deliberate terrorism — they become all the more reprehensible and detract altogether from the cause they purport to serve.

Admittedly, the situation is far from promising, but we must not give in to despair or desperation. The need of the hour is for the international community to re-engage its attention upon the situation in the Middle East with the clear focus of implementing in the nearest future the vision of two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders, as envisioned in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

A comprehensive solution to the Middle East must necessarily include the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Unfortunately, reports of the situation along the Blue Line are not very encouraging. The United Nations last open briefing to the Security Council drew attention to the continuing tense situation marked by events that raise serious concern. Each side has continued to violate the Blue Line, whether by air or land. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has played a sterling role in separating the parties. However, a lasting solution can only be the result of a consciously undertaken political process. We hope that the overall situation will allow such an initiative to be taken soon.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): The situation in the Middle East remains a source of deep concern for Ukraine.

Despite the high hopes for the renewed Israeli-Palestinian peace process after the emergence of the Quartet's road map, the violence and terror have continued to bring new deaths among the innocent civilian populations on both sides and the worsening humanitarian crisis has caused more human suffering among the Palestinians. Continued violations of the Blue Line and the air strikes by Israel against Syrian territory in October have further escalated tense and difficult situation in the region. Resolute action in full determination, aimed at bringing stability to the Middle East and at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace to the benefit of all peoples in the region, is needed by all concerned.

In his address to the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Peace in the Middle East, held last May in Kiev, the President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma reiterated, that

> "as a founding Member of the United Nations, a Member of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, a troop-contributor to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Ukraine will continue to support comprehensively the international efforts aimed at establishing peace in the Middle East".

That meeting, convened in Ukraine at a time of renewed hopes following the formal presentation of the Quartet's road map to the parties on 30 April 2003, was in fact the first international forum at which that document has received the wide support of the United Nations Member States.

Ukraine firmly believes that the Quartet's road map, having taken into account the elements and approaches of many previous initiatives of the international community, provides Israelis and Palestinians with a real opportunity to achieve by negotiation a final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. We fully support the road map's final goal of ending the occupation that began at 1967 and of the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. The basis for negotiations is well known and widely accepted by the international community — Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); the Madrid terms of reference; the principle of land for peace; and the previously signed agreements. I wish to reiterate the offer of Ukraine to provide good offices for holding peace negotiations on its territory.

It is very tragic that the initial encouraging progress in the renewed peace process was damaged by events on the ground. The leadership of both sides could have done more to seize this opportunity for peace in the Middle East. With the new Government of the Palestinian Authority now in place, we hope to see the reverse of the current tragic situation. The recent unanimous endorsement by the Security Council of the road map underscores once again that now there is no alternative to giving that plan new impetus and achieving through it the two-State solution.

We are encouraged by the recent emergence of the peace initiatives of civil societies aimed at complementing the road map with a vision of possible outlines of agreement on the final issues, which will be dealt with during bilateral negotiations. This promotes confidence between peoples and testifies to the growth of camps within Israeli and Palestinian societies willing to support both Governments in their search for lasting peace.

Ukraine continues to believe that the only way forward is through negotiation and the implementation by both sides, swiftly and in good faith, of their obligations under the road map. A meeting between Prime Ministers Ariel Sharon and Ahmed Qurei would be very important in terms of establishing dialogue and agreeing on the areas of primary actions directed at bringing positive results to the peace process. Future progress will require bold steps to be taken by both sides aimed at addressing simultaneously the major concerns of the other.

Ukraine has stated on many occasions its condemnation and utter rejection of terrorism. We call on the Palestinian Authority to take all measures within its power to prevent terrorist attacks against Israelis, particularly suicide bombings, which run contrary to the interests of the Palestinian people. We welcome the steps by Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, with the support of Egypt, to achieve a new *hudna* by Palestinian groups and then a truce with Israel. This would pave the way to implementing Palestinian Authority's obligations under the road map to confront individuals and groups conducting and planning terrorist attacks.

We recognize the right of Israel to defend its citizens. However, we believe that extrajudicial killings should be stopped as they only fuel the violence and

provoke more terrorism. Israel should implement without delay its obligations in the area of settlements, thus removing one of the major obstacles to peace. We also call on Israel to stop the construction of the wall inside the occupied Palestinian territories and to improve the humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

At this dramatic period in the history of Middle East, it is necessary to ensure that the new opportunities for progress in the peace process are not missed. The international community — the Quartet, the United Nations and the Security Council, countries of the region and other international players — has an important role to play in providing the parties with the support and cooperation they need in implementing the road map. In this regard, the establishment of a credible and effective monitoring mechanism becomes a priority.

Achieving a comprehensive Middle East settlement will be impossible without peace agreements on the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks aimed at ending the occupation of the Arab territories and at a normalization of relations with Israel. We recall, in this regard, the importance of the initiative of the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah adopted by the Arab League summit in Beirut in 2002.

In view of the current tense situation in the Middle East and its potential for further escalation, threatening regional peace and security, we call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, respect for the principles of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

I would like to express the hope that, through the joint efforts of the parties concerned and the international community, the Middle East will become a region where all peoples live in peace, security, prosperity and dignity to which they aspire and which they deserve.

Mr. Taboul (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to extend our sincere thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report contained in document A/58/416 on the situation in the Middle East.

My delegation attaches the utmost importance to developments in and ramifications of the peace process in the Middle East, in view of their repercussions on international peace and security. The tragic developments in the region, arising from violations committed by the Israeli army and the intransigence of the Israeli Government, along with its frustration of all initiatives aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive solution, augur further complications in the region.

Israeli forces have occupied Arab territories in the Syrian Golan since 1967. They confiscate the lands of the Syrian Arabs and prevent them from exercising their agricultural activities by employing various methods of intimidation and torture, in total disregard of the resolutions of international legitimacy, including resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and others, and in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, the principles of international law and international humanitarian law.

The achievement of a final and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, which is at the heart of Arab-Israeli, is essential to establishing comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. That should be achieved on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Israel must be made to commit itself to withdrawing completely from Arab territories occupied since 4 June 1967, including Jerusalem, occupied Syrian Golan and the Sheba'a Farms in Lebanon, in implementation of the principle of land for peace and other relevant international resolutions. The ongoing Israeli occupation of Arab territories represents an insurmountable obstacle to peace in the area.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): My delegation profoundly regrets that, after 33 years, the item on the situation in the Middle East remains on the agenda of the General Assembly without a solution in sight.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has further deteriorated and remains volatile. Despite numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the question of the occupied Syrian Golan has yet to be resolved. The sovereignty of Lebanon continues to be violated by Israel and requests for the release of all Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel have yet to be met. In addition, we now see the enormous challenge and uncertainty in Iraq following the war there. The complex and complicated situation in the Middle East should be of great concern to the international community in view of its potential to have grave repercussions for international peace and security.

At the core of the regional tension remains the continued illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We are all too familiar with the details and characteristics of the conflict. The consequences for the Palestinians have been particularly debilitating and tragic. The extent of the inhumane treatment of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation has been well documented in the reports of the United Nations and other independent parties. It has also been recounted by the Palestinian delegation and other concerned delegations in this Assembly and in the Security Council, including during the debate under agenda item 38 that has just concluded this morning.

Despite being democratically elected by Palestinians, President Yasser Arafat continues to be demonized, harassed and intimidated at every turn, accused of being ineffective and ineffectual, with every facet of his authority being systematically undermined and his own person subjected to all forms of humiliation, including the recent threat to deport or even eliminate him. Malaysia fully supports President Arafat and Prime Minister Qurei in their efforts to achieve peace and the creation of a viable, secure and independent State of Palestine.

The road map currently constitutes a workable platform for achieving comprehensive and durable peace, inter alia, on the basis of the two-State solution as envisaged in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002). However, with the unqualified preconditions imposed by Israel, as well as the ongoing construction of the illegal separation wall by Israel, my delegation is deeply concerned by the prospect of the road map's being rendered ineffective. We urge that the relevant Security Council resolutions be implemented, including resolution 1515 (2003). The current deplorable situation and oppression of Palestinians cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. It must be brought to an immediate end. The situation must not spiral out of control, with grave repercussions for regional and international peace and security.

Malaysia is equally concerned with the situation of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. We deplore the fact that the Arabs of the Syrian Golan continue to suffer under Israeli occupation, experiencing many deprivations, such as work restrictions, limited access to education and many other forms of humiliation and indignities of life under occupation. We consider the existence and indeed the further expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan as a gross violation of the sixth paragraph of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan remain a major obstacle to the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli peace process. We urge Israel to demonstrate its sincerity in its professed desire for peace by taking concrete and serious steps to comply with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967.

The stalemate and lack of dialogue between the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to implement those resolutions, on the basis of the principle of land for peace, are a cause for serious concern and constitute an additional negative element in an already volatile Middle East situation. The repeated renewals of the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for almost 30 years now are indicative of the tense environment between the two sides.

The aerial strikes irresponsibly launched by Israel against the sovereign territory of the Syrian Arab Republic on 5 October further deepened the chasm and mistrust between both sides. Malaysia condemned that unwarranted act of aggression against a sovereign State, which was a flagrant and serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations, principles of international law and relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We believe that such provocative attacks will have serious ramifications on the already fragile Middle East peace process.

With regard to Lebanon, there has been some significant progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) following the departure of Israeli forces from the United Nations-identified withdrawal line in South Lebanon on 16 June 2000. However, the situation in the area remains volatile and is closely linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My delegation welcomes the constructive steps already taken by Lebanon to reinstate its full effective authority in the southern territory, including the deployment of its troops. We are confident that Lebanon will do its utmost to ensure a calm environment throughout the area concerned. These actions would bode well for further progress in the discharge of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Malaysia is greatly concerned about the reported serious breaches, as well as the air, sea and land

violations of the Blue Line by Israel. These may raise the possibility of a full-scale conflict along the frontier and could easily flare up into a serious confrontation drawing in several parties. Repeated Israeli violations of the Blue Line and Lebanese sovereign territory pose serious risks of a further deterioration of the situation. It is imperative for Israel to end these violations and to respect the Blue Line, in compliance with Security Council resolution 1496 (2003). We also strongly encourage both sides to engage in diplomatic efforts and constructive dialogue to defuse the tension and resolve outstanding issues following the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and the establishment of the Blue Line.

Malaysia is also particularly concerned over the situation in Iraq, which continues to have serious international and regional implications. Discontent over Iraq could create further complications in many countries. It could widen the gap and deepen the differences between the Muslim world and the West and may well swell the ranks of the discontented in the Muslim world, especially when attention is drawn to Iraq while the oppression suffered by the Palestinian people continues to be ignored. Unfortunately, such a situation will only afford extremist elements the opportunity and a convenient excuse to mobilize support for their militant cause. It would be indeed tragic for the region if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were to be sidelined in pursuit of other political objectives in the Middle East.

My delegation reiterates its call for respect for the independence, sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and stability of Iraq and the neighbouring countries. We express our deep concern about the security situation prevailing in Iraq. The international community must exert its utmost efforts, on the basis of the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to assist the Iraqi people in ending the occupation, restoring the sovereignty and independence of Iraq and retaining control over their rights, land and economic, political and security institutions.

Given the unsettled and dangerous situation in the Middle East, my delegation remains committed to encouraging peaceful solutions to the multifaceted and complex problems faced by the region. We urge the parties concerned to seek a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); the Madrid terms of reference; the principle of land for peace; and implementation of all existing agreements between the parties towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. We urge Israel, in its own best interests, to look beyond its immediate security needs, important though they are, and to begin in earnest to engage its Arab neighbours in serious and meaningful dialogues towards the early realization of that comprehensive peace. We also call for the early restoration of the independence and sovereignty of Iraq.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 37.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements made in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today, the General Assembly heard a number of fabricated and baseless allegations against my country, made by the Israeli representative.

It is but an open secret to the international community that Israeli has constantly violated numerous accepted norms and principles of international law, in particular in the field of humanitarian law, by oppressing the Palestinian people under its occupation. We, therefore, can hardly find any regime as oppressive as the one we are speaking about.

Since my delegation has already pronounced its position on the issue at hand, I will not delve into responding to those baseless remarks at this stage. However, as a brief comment, I would like to make the following remarks.

The Israeli regime has never been a party to the internationally negotiated instruments on weapons of mass destruction or paid attention to the constant calls in other relevant forums. It is worth mentioning that the only existing obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the non-adherence of Israel to the Treaty on the Non-

Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its continued clandestine operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. In contrast, the Islamic Republic of Iran — as a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction; and the NPT — is committed to all provisions of those instruments and to making declarations and accepting international monitoring by the competent international bodies, and has always demonstrated that it would not seek any weapons of mass destruction.

As to the other groundless allegations of the Israeli representative, I need to stress that the Iranian support for the Palestinian people has always been of a moral and political nature.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): We have heard the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran accuse my country of human rights violations and of aggression. Last week, by adopting draft resolution A/C.3/58/L.69 in the Third Committee, the General Assembly expressed serious concern at the continuing violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the deterioration of the freedom of opinion and expression; persecution for the peaceful expression of political views; arrests and detention without charge and trial; continuing public executions; the use of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, in particular the practice of amputation and flogging; the forcible dissolution of political parties; the absence of due process of law; the denial of rights of persons belonging to religious minorities; systematic discrimination against women and girls; continuing discrimination against persons belonging to minorities, including against the Baha'is, Christians, Jews and Sunnis; the denial of free worship; and the disregard of property rights, among other things.

Regarding aggression, Iran is the most significant supporter of the Hizbullah, a terrorist organization, and has long been that organization's major patron, supplying it with funding, weapons and training, and also with the ideological inspiration and Islamic legitimacy necessary to ensure its broad appeal. It is also widely documented that Iran actively supports, finances, arms and trains terrorists sent to attack Israeli civilians by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Hamas organizations.

Iran maintains a policy of complete and total rejection of Israel's right to exist and has actively pursued the weapons capability necessary to actualize that policy. With the Shihab-3 missile, Iran is pursuing the capability to strike at Israeli cities as well as far into Europe and Asia. When it was paraded through the streets of Tehran, the inscription on the missile carrier declared that "Israel should be wiped off the map".

In light of its hostile intentions, as well as its long association with known terrorist elements, the regime's active pursuit of a non-conventional-weapons strike capability — including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons — Iran continues to be a source of tremendous concern to the international community. In fact, the adoption last week by the International Atomic Energy Agency of a resolution censuring Iran for the cover-up of its nuclear programme is yet another indication of Iranian subterfuge in that realm.

It is particularly distressing that the support of Iran for anti-Israeli terrorism and terrorism in general has continued even as the world has united to combat the common threat of terrorism. In the past year, the world has reawakened to the threat that terrorism poses to free societies throughout the world and has resolved to combat that scourge wherever it may breed — and it breeds in Iran.

When a regime such as that in Iran denigrates any other State for not adopting its definition of human rights or aggression, I would interpret that as a compliment. I would therefore like to thank the representative of Islamic Republic of Iran for his comments because, coming from him, these unrestrained attacks reassure me that Israel is indeed a nation which respects peace, justice and human dignity.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to make an announcement concerning the programme of work of the plenary for tomorrow morning, Wednesday, 3 December 2003.

The General Assembly will consider the following agenda items: agenda item 17 (g), "Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences"; agenda item 24, "Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations"; agenda item 43,

"Return or restitution of cultural property to countries of origin", to take action on draft resolution A/58/L.20; agenda item 60, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", to take action on draft resolution A/58/L.7/Rev.1; agenda item 106, "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family", to take up a report of the Third Committee contained in document A/58/497; agenda item 38, "Question of Palestine", to take action on draft resolutions A/58/L.23 to A/58/L.26/Rev.1; and agenda item 37, "The situation in the Middle East", to take action on draft resolutions A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28.

Members are requested to consult the *Journal* tomorrow morning for further details.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.68

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

68th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 3 December 2003, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alexandre (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 106

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Report of the Third Committee (A/58/497)

The Acting President: The Assembly will consider a report of the Third Committee on agenda item 106 entitled, "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family" (document A/58/497).

I request the Rapporteur of the Third Committee, Mr. Abdulla Eid Salman Al-Sulaiti of Qatar, to introduce the report of the Third Committee.

Mr. Al-Sulaiti (Qatar): I have the honour to present for consideration the first part of the report of the Third Committee, submitted under agenda item 106 entitled, "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family". This report has the symbol A/58/497, part I. In section 3 of the report, the Third Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution entitled "Preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004".

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Third Committee which is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Third Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind Members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same

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manner as was done in the Third Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 18 of its report.

The draft resolution, entitled "Preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004", was adopted by the Third Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 58/15).

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States to speak in explanation of vote after the vote on the resolution just adopted.

Ms. Corkery (United States of America): The United States was pleased to be among the many sponsors of the resolution contained in A/58/497 entitled, "Preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004". The United States adheres to the widely accepted view of the role of the family as the basic social unit. Further, the United States finds there to be a strong correlation between the growth of societal problems and family disintegration.

The United States intends to continue advocating the importance of stable families as the core of society. As President Bush said recently, "Strong families make our Nation better. They teach our children values and help them become responsible citizens." The United States believes that the anniversary year must identify measures to overcome those societal problems that undermine stable families. Therefore, the United States looks forward to local, national, and regional 10th anniversary commemorations with such goals in mind. In this vein the United States expects robust Secretariat assistance to such commemorations and activities, as mandated most recently in Assembly resolution 57/164, of 16 January 2003. What is the Secretariat programme for managing this mandate from the United Nations Membership?

The medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, contained in document Supplement No. 6 (A/57/6/Rev.1), lays out the following Secretariat strategy for advancing work on family issues: first, to provide "assistance to Governments and the global community to further the implementation of major intergovernmental ... policies and programmes to advance families ... issues"; secondly, the goal to be accomplished is the "enhanced capacity of Member States to advance work on social integration, including issues related to ... families"; and thirdly, to gauge the programme's goal achievement by any "increase in the number of family-related policies and programmes adopted at the national level".

This strategy translates into the following Secretariat support functions: joint consultations, advocacy and promotion, research, and technical cooperation.

To be more specific, the mandate requires Secretariat support for national coordinating mechanisms and programmes for observing the anniversary year; relevant projects by the United Nations five regional commissions; and, more specifically from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), an inter-university network of family scholars, an interactive Internet forum, a directory of national machineries regarding family issues, promotional materials — such as media kits, posters, and United Nations Radio programming — and a study on the global situation of families as promised for December 2003 by the Secretary-General in his report contained in document E/CN.5/2003/6.

Indeed, the United States looks forward to rapid implementation of today's mandate by the Secretariat, in particular by DESA and the Commission for Social Development, among other United Nations entities.

Of course, follow-up to 1994's United Nations International Year of the Family was to have been ongoing by the Secretariat, as prescribed by the Secretary-General in his 1995 report in document A/50/370. The basic objectives of the follow-up, according to General Assembly's 1997 resolution 52/81 were to strengthen and support families in performing their societal and developmental functions and to build upon families' strengths, in particular at the national and local levels.

The United States delegation was pleased that today's resolution can be implemented within existing resources. Reportedly, the mainstreaming of family issues into the recently created Focal Point on the Family within DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development means that family issues will draw from the Division's wider resources as necessary.

Indeed, that will be the case — not only through the 2004 anniversary year, but also beyond. Today's resolution does more than mandate assistance for anniversary year activities. It establishes a further, deeper mandate to be met by Secretariat programming: it strengthens DESA's programme of work on family pursuant to International Year of the Family +10 objectives in various ways into the future. Indeed, the Focal Point on the Family will continue to require resources as mainstreamed within DESA's programme budget.

Beyond the United Nations in New York, other entities of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations are rightly encouraged to continue their partnership roles with the Organization in implementing the goals of the anniversary year. We draw particular attention to the impressive non-governmental organizations high-level seminar on the family organized by the International Year of the Family +10 Committee at United Nations Headquarters for the 4 December 2003 anniversary launch.

For its part, the United States will programme activities to reaffirm the statements on the family found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to amplify global recognition of family, among other activities. It looks forward to promoting those activities widely.

In closing, it is important to reflect that the people of the world are inextricably linked to one human family. The United States cares about this family, as do others, and it seeks to collaborate with like-minded States for United Nations advocacy of the importance of family to the wider international community.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 106.

Agenda item 60 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/58/L.7/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held its debate on this agenda item, together with agenda item 10, at its 23rd to 27th plenary meetings on 6, 7 and 9 October 2003.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.7/Rev.1.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegations of Australia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Brazil, Georgia, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Thailand, Ukraine, the Republic of South Africa, Japan and the Russian Federation, it is my honour to submit for consideration by the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "Responding to global threats and challenges".

Today's world civilization unfortunately is ever more frequently obliged to counter various challenges and threats, which are global in nature. The alarming growth of the scale and brutality of international terrorism; illegal drug trafficking; transborder organized crime; continuing bloodshed in regional conflicts; a menacing deterioration of the environment; and the spread of poverty, illiteracy and illnesses — continuing obstacles to sustainable development as a whole — are only some of the problems, the solution to which is impossible without the agreed upon collective efforts of the entire international community.

The fundamental areas and methods for responding to new threats and challenges were agreed upon in the Millennium Declaration, adopted two years ago by Heads of State and Government of United Nations Member States. In light of the unprecedented increase in the pace of international life it is clearly necessary to continuously adapt the actions of the international community to rapidly changing situations in a more focused and coordinated manner in order to mobilize all components of the United Nations system and the efforts of all States, regional organizations, civil society and the private sector towards daily collective work designed to seek out effective answers to the threats and challenges of our time. That was the objective of General Assembly resolution 57/145, which was unanimously adopted a year ago and called for the United Nations to play a coordinating and leading role in drawing up an integrated and effective strategy for responding to the global threats and challenges of the twenty-first century in the context of moving towards the objectives enshrined in the Millennium Declaration.

Many Member States and regional organizations responded to that resolution and submitted their views

to the United Nations Secretary-General. Subsequently, as is well known, the Secretary-General put forward an initiative for the establishment of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which will very soon begin its work.

The draft resolution submitted today for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly has been prepared following a series of informal consultations in October and November. We would like to thank all delegations who participated in the discussion.

The proposals put forward have been taken into account by the sponsors in the text proposed for consideration. The preamble reaffirms the coordinating and leading role of the United Nations in the establishment of a cohesive and effective system of response to global threats and challenges, and recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to their elimination on the basis of the United Nations Charter and international law, and welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the observations it contains regarding ways and means for further responding to threats and challenges.

The operative part takes note of the increased interaction on the part of the international community to counter global threats and challenges, and contains recommendations to continue efforts in this direction with the leading role played by the United Nations. Paragraph 4 welcomes the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in order to prepare proposals for collective action, and expresses the readiness of the General Assembly to consider as a matter of priority at its fifty-ninth session the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the results of the work of the Panel.

The sponsors hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.7/Rev.1, entitled "Responding to global threats and challenges". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.7/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/58/L.7/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 58/16).

The Acting President: We will now have an explanation of vote after the vote by Spain.

Mr. Carriedo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): As regards operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, my delegation would like to state once again the well known position of the Government of Spain, according to which terrorism is a unique phenomenon that should not be further qualified.

As President Aznar pointed out in his statement to the Security Council on 6 May, terrorism is unique despite its thousand faces. It takes on different aspects, but it has one substantive identity. There is no such thing as domestic terrorism and international terrorism, old or new, first- or second-class terrorism. The classification is something that academics may wish to discuss, but it is not a political concept, and despite any alleged intentions, it just spreads confusion. All types of terrorism, which are manifestations of violence, are fundamentally the same and must be combated with the same hostility and with the same lack of sympathy.

That was recognized by the Security Council itself in resolution 1456 (2003) of 20 January 2003, where it used the term "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations" and thus avoided qualifying it in any way.

The Spanish delegation trusts that these considerations will be taken into account at future sessions of the General Assembly in examining this or other draft resolutions.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 60.

Agenda item 43 (*continued*)

Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin

Draft resolution (A/58/L.20)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held the debate on this item at its 51st plenary meeting, on 31 October 2003. In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/58/L.20.

The General Assembly will now take a vote on draft resolution A/58/L.20. First I would like to

mention the additional sponsors for the draft resolution, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Mauritania, Nepal and Tunisia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.20?

Draft resolution A/58/L.20 was adopted (resolution 58/17).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 43?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 24 (*continued*)

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

The Acting President: It is my understanding there is no request to consider this item at the present session. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-ninth session, and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-ninth session?

It was so decided (decision 58/513).

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 24.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/107/Rev.1)

The Acting President: The General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/58/107/Rev.1. As indicated in that document, since the terms of office of Argentina, Benin, Finland, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Peru and Sierra Leone will expire on 31 December 2003, it will be necessary for the President of the General Assembly to appoint, during the current session, seven members to fill the resulting vacancies. The members so appointed will serve for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2004.

After consultation with the Chairmen of the Groups of African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, and Western European and Other States, the President has appointed Argentina, Germany, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania, Senegal and the Syrian Arab Republic as members of the Committee on the Conferences, whose terms of office take effect from 1 January 2004. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of these appointments?

It was so decided (decision 58/409).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/58/L.23, A/58/L.24, A/58/L.25 and A/58/L.26/Rev.1)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 38 entitled "Question of Palestine" to take action on draft resolution A/58/L.23 to A/58/L.26/Rev.1. Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this item at its 65th and 66th meetings, on 1 and 2 December 2003.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/58/L.23 to A/58/L.26/Rev.1.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): Israel will vote against the draft resolutions contained in documents A/58/L.23, A/58/L.24, A/58/L.25 and A/58/L.26 Rev.1. The ritualistic recycling of these outdated draft resolutions year after year remains utterly oblivious to the realities in the Middle East and contradictory to the letter and spirit of signed accords.

Draft resolutions A/58/L.23 and L.24 refer respectively to what are termed the "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian

People" and the "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". Since their inception, these bodies have obstructed dialogue and understanding through a preset, one-sided portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They are engaged in activities that hinder, rather than promote, progress towards achieving a peaceful, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution. Moreover, the Division for Palestinian Rights, being a body within the Secretariat mandated to advance the interests of one side to a conflict, is absolutely contrary to the impartiality and the objectivity required of the Secretariat by the United Nations Charter, and is an example of the bias and lack of legitimacy associated with the United Nations treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, these bodies expend valuable resources which could be better invested in responding to the real needs of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, let alone other conflicts throughout the globe.

Draft resolution A/58/L.25 endorses the "special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat". This programme, through its various seminars, missions and exhibits, also promotes a distorted and one-sided perspective of the conflict.

Draft resolution A/58/L.26/Rev.1 claims to support a "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". Yet the draft resolution, in content and purpose, actually goes against the agreements already achieved between the parties and undermines the peace process it professes to support. As is so common in General Assembly resolutions on Arab-Israeli issues, it pretends that Israel has responsibilities with no rights and that Palestinians have rights but no responsibilities. This draft resolution openly seeks to predetermine issues that must be resolved through negotiations, violates existing agreements and undermines the integrity and the foundations of the peace process.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in the explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/58/L.23 to A/58/L.26/Rev.1.

We turn first to draft resolution A/58/L.23, entitled, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of A/58/L.23: Namibia, Oman and Togo.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland,

Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/58/L.23 was adopted by 97 votes to 7, with 60 abstentions (resolution 58/18).

[Subsequently the delegations of Ghana, South Africa, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour, and Georgia had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/58/L.24, entitled, "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of A/58/L.24: Namibia and Oman.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/58/L.24 was adopted by 98 votes to 6, with 63 abstentions (resolution 58/19).

[Subsequently the delegation of Turkmenistan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour, and the delegation of Georgia had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/58/L.25, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of A/58/L.25: Namibia and Oman.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso,

Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Honduras, Rwanda, Tonga, Uganda, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/58/L.25 was adopted by 159 votes to 6, with 6 abstentions (resolution 58/20).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Georgia and Turkmenistan informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

I would like to announce that since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.26/Rev.1, the following countries have become sponsors: Namibia and Oman.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South

Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, Uganda, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Honduras, Nauru, Rwanda, Tonga

Draft resolution A/58/L.26/Rev.1 was adopted by 160 votes to 6, with 5 abstentions (resolution 58/21).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Georgia, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Price (Canada): Canada has consistently supported the rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights to self-determination and to a Palestinian State, while emphasizing the importance of the negotiating process in the fulfilment of those rights. However, we question the value added by the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the Division for Palestinian Rights in the pursuit of that ultimate goal. Therefore we have maintained our abstention on the draft resolutions contained in documents A/58/L.23 and A/58/L.24.

Mr. Carnelos (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries of Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this explanation of vote. I would like to explain the votes by those countries on draft resolution A/58/L.23, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", and draft resolution A/58/L.24, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

During the past year the Middle East was again struck by great tragedy and violence, resulting, inter alia, in an alarmingly high number of civilian casualties. The European Union condemns the recent acts of terror and violence, which only serve to endanger the peace process towards reconciliation. We are convinced that the framework of the peace process represents the only reasonable hope for ending a conflict that has already caused far too much suffering for the peoples involved.

The European Union remains committed to the Quartet's road map, which was presented to the parties on 30 April 2003. Israelis and Palestinians must address the core issues that divide them through sustained negotiation, moving quickly towards implementation of the road map, in order to realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

The European Union regrets the fact that the terms of reference of the two United Nations bodies dealing with the question of Palestine that are the subject of the two draft resolutions I have referred to do not sufficiently reflect the spirit of the peace process. It is for that reason that, as in the past, we have abstained on the voting on those two draft resolutions.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I can be brief.

The United Kingdom, like its partners in the European Union, voted in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.26/Rev.1, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". We did so because we support the need to find a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict. But the United Kingdom regrets that the draft resolution was not better balanced.

The United Kingdom condemns terrorism absolutely.

Both sides have obligations they need to fulfil in order to make progress on the road map. The United Kingdom continues to stand ready to help both sides in their endeavour to find peace.

The Acting President: We have now heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, we would like to express our gratitude and deep appreciation to the many States that voted in favour of the important draft resolutions just adopted. In order to be brief, I would also like to thank beforehand the countries that will support the draft resolutions introduced under the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East". In particular, we would like to thank friendly countries that have sponsored those draft resolutions, as well as the Member States and observers in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There is undoubtedly great political value in the adoption of these draft resolutions by such an overwhelming majority. That majority was achieved despite the intense pressure exerted, which we know full well to have exceeded the pressure exerted in years past. We would like to state that opposition to those draft resolutions is in a political sense an Israeli opposition only, which is, regretfully, backed by the United States of America.

We reiterate our thanks and appreciation to all the countries that have backed those important resolutions.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolutions (A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this item at its 66th and 67th plenary meetings, on 2 December 2003.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28.

I call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): Israel will vote against the draft resolutions contained in documents A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28.

Regarding draft resolution A/58/L.27, Israel has stated its position on its capital, Jerusalem, on many occasions, and it is a matter of public record. Moreover, Jerusalem is an issue expressly reserved for permanent status negotiations between the parties, which we are currently endeavouring to reconvene. Both Israel and the Palestinians have committed themselves to resolving issues relating to Jerusalem exclusively through negotiations. The attempt to use this forum as an alternative to the negotiations violates the agreements between the sides and undermines the foundation of trust and cooperation that is so necessary for the permanent status talks to reach a fruitful outcome. That is why Israel finds the language in this draft resolution on Jerusalem to be unacceptable.

Concerning draft resolution A/58/L.28, on the Golan, Israel has stated on many occasions and at the highest levels its willingness and interest in resuming its negotiations with Syria without preconditions. As we have stated previously, the Middle East peace process is based, first and foremost, on the principle of direct negotiations. The letter of invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference of 30 October 1991 calls for

> "the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, through direct negotiations ... based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The objective of this process is real peace".

However, the language of this draft resolution attempts to predetermine the outcome of those negotiations and thus stands in contradiction to any genuine notion of a negotiated settlement.

For those reasons, Israel will vote against these two draft resolutions.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/58/L.27 and A/58/L.28.

We turn first to draft resolution A/58/L.27, entitled "Jerusalem". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Costa Rica, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Uganda, United States of America

Abstaining:

El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Tonga

Draft resolution A/58/L.27 was adopted by 155 votes to 8, with 7 abstentions (resolution 58/22).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/58/L.28 is entitled "The Syrian Golan". A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay

Draft resolution A/58/L.28 was adopted by 104 votes to 5, with 61 abstentions (resolution 58/23).

[Subsequently, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Korea informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Estremé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic voted in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.28, on the Syrian Golan, because we believe that its essential aspect is linked to the illicit nature of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a State. That is an imperative norm of international law.

At the same time, I wish to clarify the position of the Argentine delegation with respect to operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution. Argentina's vote does not necessarily prejudge the contents of that paragraph, particularly the reference to the line of 4 June 1967.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.28, entitled "The Syrian Golan". That vote expresses the support of the Brazilian Government for the draft resolution's driving force: the call for all parties to resume peace talks aimed at establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Nonetheless, regarding operative paragraph 6, I should stress the Brazilian Government's position that the border between Israel and Syria is a matter of negotiation between the two parties on the basis of the parameters established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. Carnelos (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries, Bulgaria and Romania and the European Free Trade Association country belonging to the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this explanation of vote on the draft resolution just adopted.

I should like to explain my country's vote on draft resolution A/58/L.28, entitled "The Syrian Golan". The European Union is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. The current spiral of violence must cease. There can be no military solution to the Middle East conflict. A just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the situation in the Middle East — including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks — must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); on the Madrid terms of reference, in particular the principle of land for peace; and on the implementation of the road map and all existing agreements between the parties. We shall continue to work relentlessly with the regional parties and within the Quartet towards that goal.

The European Union also wishes to point out that a final peace settlement will not be complete if it fails to take into account the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese aspects. Negotiations should resume as soon as possible with the aim of reaching an agreement. In that regard, the European Union welcomes the Arab peace initiative endorsed at the Arab League Summit in Beirut, which offers the prospect of a comprehensive peace settlement for the whole Middle East region.

We believe that the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan contains geographical references that could undermine the process of bilateral negotiation. For that reason, as in previous years, the European Union abstained from voting on the draft resolution.

Mr. Maalouf (United States of America): The United States remains committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on all tracks. Our opposition to the General Assembly draft resolution regarding the Syrian Golan (A/58/L.28) stems from the perspective the draft presents regarding the situation in the Middle East: it implies that only

Israel has obligations and responsibilities to make peace. This one-sided draft resolution is not consistent with Syria's professed desire to resolve the Golan issue through negotiations, as mandated by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Syrian President Assad recently reaffirmed his support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Syrian actions must reflect those words. Regrettably, all too often they do not. Syrian support for terrorist groups dedicated to the perpetuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict exacerbates regional tensions and threatens regional peace. The impact of Syria in Lebanon is harmful to Lebanon's prospects for full restoration of its sovereignty. Lebanon's sovereignty has been mentioned in numerous past Security Council resolutions.

We urge Syria to address those issues and to do what is necessary for a resumption of the peace negotiations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank the delegations that voted in favour of draft resolution A/58/L.28 on the Syrian Arab Golan. The resolution reaffirms once again that occupation, together with the establishment of settlements and violation of the rights of peoples, must be rejected by everyone.

Through today's vote, the General Assembly has sent Israel a clear message about the need to respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, as well as the need to withdraw from all the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. Israel's decision to impose its jurisdiction, its laws and its administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no legality whatsoever. Israel's continued occupation and de facto annexation of the Golan constitutes a stumbling block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Israel must heed and abide by the international community's voice. A settlement can be achieved only if Israel withdraws from occupied territory to the line of 4 June 1967 and if it restores the legitimate rights of peoples, in particular the Palestinian people.

We listened to the statement just made by the representative of the United States of America. It was a highly regrettable statement because the United States is a sponsor of the peace process that began in Madrid, and a sponsor is expected to be impartial and just. But to be biased and blindly unfair, as the United States has been, is completely unacceptable.

As shown in the statement made yesterday by its President, Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, Syria is and always has been sincere regarding its commitments to the international community. The United States is the one most familiar with the commitments and agreements that Syria has signed with the United States through negotiations sponsored by the United States in which Syria committed itself to a just and lasting settlement. What we heard from the representative of the United States was a false and distorted statement that twisted reality. Introducing a foreign issue into the item and the draft resolution under discussion is absurd and deserves no comment. The Syrian presence in Lebanon, which is not the subject of our discussion today, is based on Lebanon's request on relevant agreements. Syria wants Lebanon to enjoy its full sovereignty and independence, and this has constantly been reaffirmed by Syria. The interjection of this issue by the representative of the United States of America for personal reasons, I suspect, is absolutely unacceptable. I invite the United States delegation to think over what its representative said so irresponsibly before the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I have been informed that it would be advisable to keep items 37 and 38 open in the agenda of the fifty-eighth session. Therefore, we have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 37 and 38.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I was obliged to ask for the floor to comment on what was said by the representative of the United States. We would like to express our regret regarding the irresponsible remarks of the United States representative. His remarks have, moreover, nothing to do with the question under consideration, that is, the Syrian Golan occupied by Israel since 1967, in contravention of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

I would like to reiterate that Syrian-Lebanese relations are governed by friendly ties and good-neighbourly relations. The presence of Syria in Lebanon is based on agreements concluded between Syria and Lebanon. We urge the representative of the United States to give thought to the irresponsible remarks he made because they are rejected.

The Acting President: Before moving to the next item, I would like to make an announcement regarding the programme of work of the plenary for Friday, 5 December 2003. In addition to agenda items 28 and 40 (f) relating to Afghanistan, the General Assembly will take up, as a second item, agenda item 35, "Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait". As the third item, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 40 and its sub-items (a) to (e) relating to humanitarian assistance, in order to take action on draft resolutions A/58/L.22 and A/58/L.32 to A/58/L.35.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.69

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

69th plenary meeting
Friday, 5 December 2003, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolution (A/58/L.34)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions (A/58/L.22 and A/58/L.35)

(e) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Draft resolution (A/58/L.33)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the General Assembly considered sub-items (a) to (e) of agenda item 40 during its 37th to 39th plenary meetings, which took place from 20 to 21 October 2003.

I give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolutions A/58/L.22 and A/58/L.35, on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa): On behalf of the Group of African States, I have the honour to introduce, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 40, concerning the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance to individual countries or regions, draft resolution A/58/L.22, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia", and draft resolution A/58/L.35, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi".

Draft resolution A/58/L.22, regarding Ethiopia, which is before the General Assembly for the second time, is generally an updated version of the previous draft resolution, and contains very few additions. Among the major elements of the draft resolution is the call for the international community to support the programme of the Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia, which aims at breaking the cycle of food-aid dependency within the next three to five years. We believe that the implementation of that programme, along with other existing programmes mentioned in the draft resolution, will be a breakthrough in fighting the severe consequences of recurrent drought in that country. We ask that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

I should also like to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/58/L.22, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Bhutan, Canada, Congo, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Luxembourg,

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Mauritania, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Somalia, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine and Yemen.

I also have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.35, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi". This is a new draft resolution in the General Assembly. It has been necessitated by the serious food insecurity crisis caused by two consecutive years of drought, floods and heavy rains, leading to serious crop failure. The vulnerability of Malawian communities has also been exacerbated by the rapid spread of the human immunodeficiency syndrome — HIV/AIDS — poverty and malnutrition, particularly among children, creating greater levels of dependency and undermining that people's ability to cope with humanitarian crises.

The long-term consequences of natural disasters are likely to be severe for a poor developing country like Malawi, and call for international cooperation to assist in capacity-building in the areas of predicting, preparing for and responding to disasters. It is therefore the aim of this draft resolution to mobilize the international community and encourage it to maintain its unwavering support for the people of Malawi affected by humanitarian crises.

The draft resolution recalls all the relevant resolutions relating to humanitarian crises, including resolution 46/182, the annex of which contains the guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance for natural disasters. Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the draft resolution recognizes the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food, medical care, necessary social services and the right to security in the event of lack of livelihood due to circumstances beyond their control.

The draft resolution welcomes the positive role of the Government of Malawi in relief operations and coordination with the United Nations system. The efforts of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)through the United Nations consolidated appeals process is acknowledged, and OCHA is requested to continue to improve the effectiveness of that process.

The draft resolution also emphasizes the importance of enhanced international cooperation, and calls upon all States to assist Malawi in the areas of mitigating the effects of natural disasters and disaster prevention and preparedness. In addition, the international community is requested to continue to support Malawi in its efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and malnutrition. The draft resolution also requests the Secretar -General to report on the status of the implementation of its provisions during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The draft resolution has been the subject of informal and bilateral consultations. I would therefore like to thank all the delegations that actively contributed to the process in order to reach a consensus text.

In addition to the list of sponsors that appears in the draft resolution, the following delegations have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mauritania and Norway.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have just been informed that the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.33 have requested that the introduction of that draft be deferred to Tuesday, 9 December.

I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.34, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a privilege for the Kingdom of Morocco to introduce, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as of all 162 sponsors, draft resolution A/58/L.34, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". One aspect of this draft resolution deserves particular mention. Although it was originally submitted by the Group of 77 and beyond the Group of 77, and many China, it soon became obvious during informal consultations that the international consensus on the draft extended delegations belonging to various groups expressed a wish to support — and a significant number to sponsor — the draft resolution.

In addition to the countries mentioned in the document, the following States are also sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.34: the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Monaco, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

It is particularly encouraging that, throughout this session, international consensus on the draft resolution has been consolidated once again, and even furthered. I would like, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to

thank all delegations members of the various groups for their support and their sponsorship.

Growing support for the draft resolution can be summed up in a number of observations, the first of which relates to the nature of the subject. Because of their scope, intensity and frequency, and the dramatic consequences that they have, natural disasters affect all the people of the Earth. Of course, vulnerable countries, which often lack effective means of mitigating the long-term repercussions of these disasters at the social, economic and ecological levels, are the worst affected. It is also true, however, that countries with significant levels of development and industrialization have not been spared the consequences of such disasters. We have witnessed, therefore, both a growing collective awareness of the need to work together on prevention and to limit the consequences of natural disasters when they do take place, as well as to urgently bolster international cooperation in this sphere.

That is why the draft resolution submitted today to the General Assembly today reiterates the need to strengthen international cooperation in the provision of humanitarian assistance at all stages of a disaster, from relief to development, in particular through the proper use of multilateral mechanisms and the provision of adequate resources.

As the draft resolution makes clear, we must work to achieve greater international cooperation, in particular with United Nations bodies and regional organizations, in order to help developing countries to acquire the capacity to prevent natural disasters, prepare for them and respond to them.

The draft resolution also focuses on prevention strategies, preparation for natural disasters and early-warning systems at the country and regional levels. It also encourages the further use of space-based and ground-based remote-sensing technologies to help to prevent natural disasters and mitigate their effects. The draft resolution also recognizes the role played by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point for the entire United Nations system for the promotion and coordination of humanitarian assistance organizations of the United Nations and other partners in the humanitarian fields in the area of natural disasters.

Finally — and this is a particularly important element — the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to examine ways to further improve the assessment of needs and responses, to enhance the availability of data and to consider recommendations in this respect.

Indeed, the sole purpose of the draft resolution is to improve the capacity of States, in particular developing countries, to prevent, and to respond more effectively to the tragic consequences of natural disasters. It is our purpose — and our duty — to help save lives. The central issue is the question posed by Diderot: what do we owe each other? This message of brotherhood, international solidarity and respect for others must be at the heart of our humanitarian assistance activities. That is the message that I want to convey today.

I cannot conclude without warmly thanking the delegation of India, in particular Mr. Bhagwant Bishnoi, who, this year as every year, has acted as a skilful and enthusiastic facilitator of the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

On behalf of the sponsors, I appeal for the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/58/L.22, A/58/L.34 and A/58/L.35.

We will turn first to A/58/L.22, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia".

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.22, the following countries have become sponsors: Argentina, Finland, Italy and Malaysia.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.22?

Draft resolution A/58/L.22 was adopted (resolution 58/24).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Draft resolution A//58/L.34 is entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

Since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.34, the following countries have become sponsors: Estonia, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.34?

Draft resolution A/58/L.34 was adopted (resolution 58/25).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Draft resolution A/58/L.35 is entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi".

Since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.35, the following countries have become sponsors: Italy, Kenya, Madagascar and Togo.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt A/58/L.35?

Draft resolution A/58/L.35 was adopted (resolution 58/26).

Mrs. Zewdie (Ethiopia): The adoption by consensus of the resolution "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia" for the second time in the General Assembly is a reflection of the reaffirmation of commitment of the international community to fight humanitarian crises collectively. This year's resolution draws the attention of the international community to the programme of coalition for food security in Ethiopia with the ambitious objective of breaking the cycle of aid dependence within three to five years.

Lifting a food-insecure and vulnerable population of 50 million out of poverty within three to five years would indeed be a daunting task, requiring the commitment of all stakeholders. The Government demonstrated its commitment for the programme by increasing the budget allocated for food security by 50 per cent this year. The response of the international community during their conference, held three days ago in Addis Ababa to find a lasting solution for the drought problem, has been encouraging. It is our sincere hope that the international community's valuable support will be with us in the full realization of this programme.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the African Group and all those who have shown their cooperation by joining the sponsorship of the resolution. In the same vain, I would like to extend our gratitude to Italy in its capacity as the President of the European Union, United States of America, Japan, India and Canada for their constructive contributions during our bilateral consultations. I would also like to express my thanks to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance for its support, and His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, for the able leadership he had demonstrated in coordinating the process of the resolution.

My country looks forward to the full implementation of this resolution.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-items (a), (b) and (c) of agenda item 40.

It was so decided.

Agenda item 35

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-ninth session?

It was so decided (decision 58/513).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): This concludes our consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 28

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Agenda item 40

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(f) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/616)

Draft resolution (A/58/L.32)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will consider these items in a joint debate. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Kelley (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division): I should like to advise members of the General Assembly that the report of the Secretary-General on these items, under the symbol A/58/616, will be made available in all languages during the course of our debate today and will be distributed to you as they become available. The reason for the delay in its issuance is due to the fact that the Security Council mission to Afghanistan returned to Headquarters on 7 November. The mission's finding formed a critical input to the Secretary-General's report and thus was finalized only in the last few days. The Secretariat mobilized additional human resources during these past two days so as to ensure that the report becomes available in all languages during our debate today.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.32.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I have the honour to introduce this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan under items 28 and 40 (f) of the agenda of the General Assembly. Please allow me to underscore from the outset that Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will later be presented by Italy as the presidency of the European Union.

The date for the discussion and adoption of this year's Afghanistan resolution coincides with the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement. Two years ago, the Afghans took their future into their own hands, seized an historic opportunity, ended a cycle of brutal civil war and poverty, and concluded the Bonn Agreement. This Agreement paved the way for a new start for Afghanistan for a better future which holds the prospect of political stability, economic reconstruction and peaceful development.

In the last two years, the Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, has made significant progress in implementing the Bonn Agreement and recovering from the devastation caused by more than two decades of war. After the adoption of last year's resolution, further progress was achieved in various areas, including the development of a comprehensive national budget, the publication of a draft text for a constitution, the beginning of the disarmament demobilization and reintegration process, and the first steps in the formation of a national army and a national police. This is a clear sign of increased Afghan ownership, which we welcome wholeheartedly.

At the same time, much remains to be done. Having led the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, and having gained a personal impression of the situation on the ground, I think it is right to say that we are at a critical juncture in the socio-economic and political reconstruction of this country. Germany sees currently four fundamental areas which need to be tackled immediately by the Afghan Government and with the largest possible support by the international community if we want to avoid putting at risk the full implementation of the Bonn process. First, the representativeness of the Government needs to be increased — in particular in the security institutions — and efforts to promote national unity and reconciliation have to be strengthened. Secondly, security countrywide, which is currently deteriorating owing to terrorist activities, factional fighting and drug-related crime, has to be improved and the authority of the central Government must be extended. Thirdly, the pace of reconstruction and the provision of the necessary financial resources has to be accelerated. And fourthly, the efforts of the Transitional Administration to eliminate illicit poppy cultivation, trafficking in drugs and their precursors and to improve law enforcement, crop substitution and other alternative livelihood and development programmes in Afghanistan have to be maintained and intensified.

All of those areas are interlinked. Each of them has the potential, not only to adversely affect the prospect of political stability, economic reconstruction and peaceful development in Afghanistan, but also to substantially jeopardize those processes. Therefore, none of those areas can be neglected at the expense of the others. All of those priority areas require simultaneous commitment and action by the Afghan Government, as well as enhanced support by the international community and Afghanistan's neighbours.

This year's draft resolution, A/58/L.32, which I have the honour to present today, renews that message to the Afghan people, to its neighbouring States and to the international community. It has been jointly drafted by many delegations in a spirit of support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The large

number of sponsors — more than 130 of them — is yet another sign that despite crises in other regions of the world, Afghanistan remains at the top of the international community's list of priorities. It is a strong signal of the continued support of the United Nations for the Afghan people and for the Transitional Administration in Kabul.

Let me quickly highlight some of the key aspects of the new text. First, this year's draft resolution had to incorporate the political developments in Afghanistan that have occurred over the past 12 months. It also takes into account the findings of the recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan. It welcomes the positive developments taking place in Afghanistan, spells out the major challenges lying ahead and addresses the responsibilities of the main parties inside as well as outside of Afghanistan. It welcomes the recent expansion of the International Security Assistance Force mandate, in accordance with the Bonn Agreement, as well as the progressive establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in various parts of Afghanistan.

Additionally, the draft resolution reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in international assistance efforts, calls for continued international support for the Transitional Administration in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement and endorses its priorities. The draft also emphasizes, however, that the main responsibility for a sustainable political solution lies with the Afghan people themselves. Unless all Afghan groups respect the authority of the Transitional Administration and cooperate fully to implement the Bonn Agreement, a lasting peace cannot be obtained.

The draft resolution further reflects the progress that has been achieved in the humanitarian field, in particular, with regard to the implementation of relief and reconstruction programmes. Unfortunately, achievements in that field have been overshadowed by a series of lethal terrorist attacks on humanitarian personnel throughout the country, resulting in the withdrawal of various non-governmental organizations from Afghanistan or from certain regions of the country, with a consequent significant slowdown of relief or development work. In order to address that changed environment, the draft resolution has a greater focus on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and on the question of sufficient access by them to all parts of the country.

The draft resolution retains its strong emphasis on human rights and on the improvement of the situation of women and children, in particular, that of girls. In that regard, my Government welcomes Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We hope that that ratification will form the basis for gradual progress in that area.

The draft resolution also highlights the continued influx of large numbers of refugees and of internally displaced persons seeking to return to their places of origin. That migration is an additional burden on the Transitional Administration and needs to be managed in a comprehensive and sustainable way. By June 2003, the total number of those repatriated had already surpassed 2 million. My Government commends the efforts undertaken by the Transitional Administration, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator in that regard.

For many years now, Germany has felt a special commitment to aid Afghanistan, bilaterally as well as within the United Nations. That builds on a long-standing tradition of exchange between the Afghan and German peoples in the cultural and academic sectors. The German commitment embraced from the beginning many projects, inter alia, in the spheres of education and human rights. Germany also took the lead role in setting up the new Afghan police force. Additionally, Germany has recently extended its civil and military engagement in Afghanistan. In the context of the Security Council decision to expand the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) beyond Kabul, the German Government decided to expand its presence in Afghanistan to the Herat region in the west and to the region around Kunduz in the north of the country. On 1 December 2003 a German civilian component commenced operations from our Embassy's new branch office in Herat. Since 25 October 2003, work has been under way to establish a German ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz, which, by the end of this year, will become a German-led NATO pilot PRT project.

By formally expanding our civilian presence beyond Kabul and its surrounding areas, we hope to help Afghanistan break out of the vicious circle with a lack of security in turn hindering progress in the political, economic and humanitarian reconstruction

effort. We would welcome any military or civilian participation by interested partners in either the ISAF pilot project in Kunduz or the purely civilian German component in Herat.

Germany believes that that strategy is the best way to ensure long-term stability, by facilitating reconstruction efforts throughout the country and by providing a secure environment for the constitutional process and electoral preparations. We strongly hope that other nations will establish additional PRTs in the near future. It is our view, however, that those efforts should be complemented by a reaffirmation of the commitment of the international community to promote the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan.

I renew in this regard my appeal to all Member States to fulfil the commitments they made at Tokyo in 2002 and reiterated at Dubai in September of this year, and to contribute substantially to the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund, to the Law and Order Trust Fund and to the Afghan National Development Framework.

Furthermore, Germany is of the view that the international community should seriously consider the possibility of a follow-up conference to the Bonn process and of a donor conference, as suggested by President Karzai. In Afghanistan, the conditions necessary for a credible national political process are not yet in place. It is becoming more and more evident that not all core outcomes intended by Bonn can actually be achieved by mid-2004. We believe that a systematic review of the Bonn Agenda and the elaboration of future benchmarks for the political process should be undertaken soon, in order to generate the necessary financial resources in time and to avoid a political vacuum after June 2004.

I would like to stress the key role of the United Nations in this context. The United Nations is, and will remain, the key body in aiding and supporting our Afghan friends in rebuilding their society, their economy and their country. The United Nations has assumed these tasks admirably. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General; his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi; and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their tireless efforts.

I am sure that I speak on behalf of all of us in this regard when I say that we owe sincere and deep gratitude to Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi for his exceptional leadership and for the very valuable role he has played throughout the process. We wish him all the best for the future.

Germany will continue consistently to support the efforts of the United Nations in this area with all the means at its disposal. We hope jointly to achieve the goal of a peaceful and free Afghanistan that will play its part in ensuring the region's long-term stability.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all Member States willing to sponsor this draft resolution and would appreciate it very much if we could adopt it — as in the past — by consensus.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): The fifth of December is an important date in the recent history of Afghanistan. Two years ago, on this date, Afghan political groups succeeded in establishing a political road map by signing an Agreement in Bonn, Germany. Today, with great satisfaction, we are celebrating the signing of the Agreement.

Despite enormous challenges, the Afghan Government has been able to meet the benchmarks set by that Agreement. A brief look back at the events of the past two years shows that the political actors have been committed to implementing the Bonn Agreement.

Immediately after the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan Interim Authority was established. The Interim Authority governed the country until the convening of the emergency Loya Jirga — the great assembly — in June 2002. The broad-based Transitional Authority approved by that emergency Loya Jirga could be considered the most representative Government the recent history of Afghanistan. In Afghanist. ethnic group has an absolute majority. No et group is ignored, underrepresented or alienated in the Government. While Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic nation, all the groups have a common history marked by patriotism. The Transitional Authority will govern until national elections are held in 2004.

In the past two years, major achievements have been made and positive developments have taken place in Afghanistan. They include the following: the return of a large number of refugees to the country, and the return of many internally displaced persons to their places of origin; the successful implementation of the back-to-school programme; efforts aimed at the

restoration of the human rights of women, including their participation in the political, civil, economic and social life of the country; the introduction of the new Afghan currency; the development of a comprehensive national development budget; and the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process (DDR) of the former combatants.

Finally, the most recent major accomplishment has been the release of the draft Constitution of Afghanistan, which has generated a lively national debate among different sections of Afghan society.

Despite those positive achievements, Afghanistan still faces many challenges. The pace of reconstruction and rehabilitation is not satisfactory, as the Security Council mission to Afghanistan rightly reported. There is an increasing frustration among Afghans about the lack of a peace dividend and of tangible benefits.

The cultivation, production and illicit trafficking of drugs is another major problem faced by the Afghan Government. Unfortunately, poverty and deprivation have pushed thousands of farmers into the cultivation of the lucrative poppy crop. That challenge requires a multidimensional and comprehensive plan that takes into account both consumers and producers. We are of the view that the economic development of Afghanistan, and particularly the development of sustainable and gainful alternative livelihoods, will have a positive impact on reducing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Sustained international assistance is also required in this field.

We firmly believe that a strong international commitment to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan should produce visible achievements, thereby considerably enhancing the authority and credibility of the Afghan Government. Such progress is key to political stability.

The lack of security in some parts of Afghanistan is another challenge that the Afghan Government is facing. In that regard, we are thankful to Ambassador Gunter Pleuger of Germany and to all members of the Security Council for their recent visit to Afghanistan and for having highlighted that challenge in their report to the Security Council. That report (S/2003/1704), regarding the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, covered different aspects of the political, economic and social life of the country. It also underlines the cross-border infiltration of terrorists from neighbouring countries to Afghanistan and their subversive activities in the south, south-east and east of Afghanistan. As pointed out in the report, those terrorist acts are considered a significant threat to the Afghan Government and the international assistance community.

Some incidents of insecurity, and clashes between some local leaders and commanders have also occurred in other parts of the country. Recently, the Afghan Government has taken strong measures to prevent the occurrence of such incidents. However, those local leaders and commanders have reaffirmed their allegiance to the Government. They have been part of the political process initiated after the Bonn Agreement, participated in the emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002 and are currently politically active in the national debate on the new draft constitution. At a later stage, they will be active in the presidential election of 2004.

The reality is that the insecurity from the east, south-east, and south of the country has ideological and political foundations with the international terrorist network, and not from the so-called ethnic divisions within Afghanistan. Analysts have often overlooked that fact. The insecurity in the border area of Afghanistan is not due to the alienation, frustration or lower status of any ethnic group in Afghanistan; it is a deliberate policy of religiously motivated extremist groups, who have nostalgia for the Taliban. Those groups challenge the authority and legitimacy of President Karzai and launch attacks against the ISAF and the coalition forces and personnel of the international assistance community. Many non-Afghans are involved in those subversive acts.

There is no connection between the burning of girls' schools or the killing of aid workers and the so-called ethnic claims falsely portrayed by some poorly informed analysts. Recruitment of fighters and fund-raising, with the explicit or implicit consent of the local authorities of our neighbour to the south, is now self-evident.

As already observed, Afghanistan continues to face a national security challenge from the remnants of the Taliban-Al Qaeda groups who fled to their sanctuaries across our borders to the south and south-east and are now trying to regroup and disrupt peace and security and the lives of our people. That threat must be eliminated with the help of our partners and

the meaningful and resolute cooperation of the Pakistani Government.

We believe that an overwhelming number of the people of Pakistan, like the Afghans, do not want their lives to be taken hostage by terrorists and extremists, who misrepresent their faith and aspirations by opposing peace and progress. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the recent tripartite commission meetings and the progress achieved with the common goal of fighting against terrorism.

Afghanistan is thankful to the international community and to the non-governmental organizations for their sustained support towards the country's reconstruction process. Security in Afghanistan requires the launching of major- and medium-sized reconstruction projects that would provide an alternative livelihood for former combatants.

Before concluding, I would like to mention some pertinent points. There was an agreement on the principle of extending the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside the capital, Kabul. Moreover, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in its first ever mission outside Europe, took over the command of ISAF forces outside the capital, subsequent to negotiations with the Afghan authorities. By now, concrete action has begun in which NATO's German units have dispatched provincial reconstruction teams in the northern town of Kunduz. Civilian experts are part of those units assisting Afghanistan in diverse reconstruction fields and are welcomed by the local administrations and population. We hope that pilot project will be extended to other urban centres of the country.

Let me conclude by expressing our sincere gratitude to the German Mission and Ambassador Gunter Pleuger and his colleagues, particularly Mr. Seidenberger and Mr. Kuechle, for their valuable and tireless efforts in the coordination and drafting of the draft resolution on Afghanistan presented to the General Assembly. I hope that draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the EFTA Country Iceland align themselves with this statement.

Two years have passed since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. Since then, several critical steps for its implementation have been made. The European Union takes note of the significant progress made in many areas over recent months. Particularly, we welcome the strides made in the reconstruction process, as well as the return of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The European Union welcomes the recent publication of the draft constitution. With regard to the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the European Union expects to see a democratic and fair completion of that important traditional Afghan consultation. The European Union hopes that it will approve a constitution in step with international standards and based on the primacy of international law, democratic principles, and respect for human rights, including gender equality and social justice.

Notwithstanding that progress, major challenges lie ahead and much remains to be done. In today's discussion we should look forward and focus on what needs to be done to overcome the obstacles still blocking full implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

In this context, the recent mission of the Security Council to Afghanistan has confirmed that the lack of security in many areas of the country, caused by terrorism, factional fighting and drug trafficking, is still a major concern. The lack of security is significantly affecting the political and reconstruction processes, especially in the south and south-east regions.

The European Union welcomes the recent Security Council resolution 1510 (2003), authorizing the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission to operate outside the area of Kabul, and it encourages further efforts by Member States to establish or contribute to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs). The European Union also recalls the importance of security sector reform, including the reconstitution of the new Afghan national army and police, as well as justice reform. In this regard, we welcome the progress achieved so far under the impetus of the lead nations. In the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration area, the European Union recalls the steps taken to reform the Ministry of Defence, and it invites the Afghan transitional administration to complete the reform process, ensuring that the Ministry becomes truly representative

of all Afghans, and to extend this process of reform to other institutions.

The European Union is greatly concerned about poppy cultivation and illicit drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan. Cultivation in traditional areas has decreased, but it has moved into new regions. As a result, the overall area of cultivation increased by 8 per cent, from 74,000 hectares in 2002 to 80,000 hectares in 2003. There was little effective law enforcement. The European Union welcomes the Afghan national drug control strategy as the first step to tackling the problem. It reaffirms its readiness to assist in its implementation with the aim of eliminating illicit poppy cultivation, including by offering crop substitution and other alternative livelihood and development programmes. The European Union will also support the fight against illicit trafficking of drugs within Afghanistan, in neighbouring countries along trafficking routes, including through increased cooperation with them to strengthen counter-narcotic controls.

A key step in the implementation of the Bonn process is the preparation for elections. We reiterate the need for free and fair elections to be held next year. The European Union and its member States have pledged considerable assistance to Afghanistan in preparing for those elections. We must recognize that the present situation of insecurity in certain areas constitutes an additional obstacle in respecting the time frame provided for in the Bonn Agreement. Given the risks that a prolonged delay could involve, we underline the importance of credible general elections taking place as soon as possible.

The European Union stresses the importance of the coordination of donor resources by the transitional administration in conjunction with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has allowed United Nations agencies and other donors to make the best use of their resources. The European Union has responded with large-scale assistance to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs existing in Afghanistan. We remain strongly committed to providing the necessary humanitarian assistance and to delivering a substantial contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The efforts and the assistance of the international community should contribute to further enhancing the authority of the transitional administration and the Afghan people's ownership in consolidating peace in Afghanistan and in rebuilding their country and its institutions.

The human rights situation has improved, but much more remains to be done, in particular with respect to women's rights. The Bonn Agreement committed the transitional authority to ensuring respect for human rights, yet we remain concerned about reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in some parts of the country.

Restoring overall security and lasting peace in Afghanistan is impossible without the contribution of neighbouring countries. The European Union is well aware of the importance of regional cooperation and integration in securing peace among nations. Therefore, we call on Afghanistan's neighbours to fully implement the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002. In this regard, we welcome the recent signing of the TTI agreement in Dubai in September 2003.

The European Union has been fully committed to and involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan since 2001. We are ready to reaffirm our commitment to the socio-political and economic rebuilding of the country. After two years, it is important not to lose the momentum for peace and security in Afghanistan. To this end, we should seriously consider the Afghan President's wish to convene a follow-up conference next year, following the conclusion of the Constitutional Loya Jirga.

Mr. Ullah (Pakistan): We are considering the situation in Afghanistan on this day, the second anniversary of the historic Bonn Agreement. Pakistan attaches great importance to this Agreement, which has set in motion a process for the rebuilding of political institutions and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Pakistan has worked closely with the international community in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

Afghanistan has reached a crucial stage in the implementation of the Bonn process. The constitutional process is underway, as are preparations for elections next year. While there has been progress in the political process and in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, these cannot be achieved in the absence of security. The deteriorating security situation threatens stability, not just in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, but throughout the country,

creates hurdles in Afghanistan's path to recovery and development and, above all, seeks to undermine and derail the Bonn process itself.

Afghanistan's worsening security situation has been comprehensively analysed in the report of the recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan (S/2003/1074). As identified in the report, the main factors contributing to deterioration in Afghanistan's security situation are: first, the activities of the Taliban and other extremists; secondly, the arbitrary control exercised by local commanders and warlords; and thirdly, illicit drug production and trafficking. Among the key concrete recommendations proposed in the report are the withdrawal of all factional forces from Kabul in accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement; reforms in Afghanistan's security sector including in the Afghan national army, police, Ministry of Defence and intelligence services; and the initiation of a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans willing to help rebuild the country, irrespective of past events, in order to strengthen the central Government and the basic institutions of the State. These are the essential prerequisites for reversing the alarming security situation in Afghanistan.

Pakistan welcomes the recent decision by NATO to expand the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside Kabul. While that is no doubt a step in the right direction, piecemeal and modest deployments will not create a secure environment in Afghanistan. What is needed is the rapid and massive expansion of ISAF and deployment of its contingents throughout Afghanistan. That is the essential requirement in order to stabilize the country, assist in the extension of the central Government's authority and ensure the fair, impartial and verifiable disarmament and demobilization of all of Afghanistan's warring factions.

Additionally, there is a need to tackle the serious drug problem in Afghanistan that is both a symptom and a cause of the instability in that country. All the armed factions in Afghanistan — including the warlords and the Taliban — are profiting from the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs. Moreover, as those groups are all benefiting from that trade, it is also in their interest to perpetuate it.

Pakistan recognizes the serious threat posed to Afghanistan's security by the resurgence of extremist forces — including the Taliban — in eastern and southern Afghanistan. That is a symptom of a deeper problem that is directly linked to Pashtoon alienation and the rising power of the warlords. The following truths must be recognized: first, not every angry Pashtoon is a member of the Taliban, and secondly, there is no warlord in Afghanistan who is serving anybody's interest except his own. The chaos, corruption and criminal activities being perpetuated once again by both major and minor warlords in Afghanistan is recreating the situation that existed in Afghanistan in 1992-1993. It was that chaos, corruption, and banditry which generated popular support for the Taliban. In the absence of security, law and order, people in villages and towns are once again turning to religious leaders and extremists. Some of these elements are associated with the Taliban; others are not.

For its own part, Pakistan will not allow any group or entity to use its soil for acts of terrorism in Afghanistan. Given our role in ousting the Taliban following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, Pakistan would not like to see their revival and return to power in Afghanistan. Pakistan is cooperating with the United States and Afghanistan in strengthening security along our western borders through the Trilateral Commission. In its last meeting, held on 2 December, the three sides agreed to establish a subcommittee on military information exchange and coordination to develop a common operational picture of the terrorist threat in the border regions. That measure will significantly enhance the military capabilities of all three parties in the war against terrorism. The joint communiqué issued after the meeting referred to a renewed mutual commitment of the three countries to increase strategic cooperation to counter the terrorist threat.

For the first time in its history, Pakistan has deployed 70,000 troops along its difficult, porous and inhospitable 2,500 kilometre border with Afghanistan. In addition, we have taken proactive measures in border areas, including the formation and deployment of an elite rapid reaction force, greater intelligence gathering, construction of a 30-kilometre fence in key areas along the border and the installation of searchlights and floodlights in various locations. Our troops have orders to kill suspected Taliban and Al Qaeda infiltrators or exfiltrators on sight.

We are carrying out our anti-terrorism operations at great human, material and political cost. We have thus far conducted over 150 such operations and have captured over 500 Al Qaeda and Taliban elements. We have lost 25 soldiers and policemen in that process. No other country has scored so many successes against Al Qaeda and Taliban remnants and — with very few exceptions — hardly any other country has paid so high a price.

Rather than seeking to shift the blame for the growing insecurity, the time has come to stop the blame game and to address the real security threats that remain inside Afghanistan. Serious decisions must be taken, starting with the demilitarization of Kabul. There can be no successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all the armed factions as long it is perceived that the capital remains under the control of warlords and factions in defiance of the Bonn Agreement.

Pakistan remains committed to its obligations under the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, signed on 22 December last year. There is no country that wants peace and stability in Afghanistan more than Pakistan, and no country stands to suffer more from instability in Afghanistan than Pakistan. Pakistan stands by its commitment to fight the terrorist threat in Afghanistan. At the same time, let me affirm that Pakistan will not tolerate the use of Afghan soil by third parties to carry out terrorist attacks against Afghanistan's immediate neighbours.

Earlier this year, President Musharraf told a visiting Afghan Minister that Pakistan would continue to strive for a peaceful and stable neighbourhood with a view to creating an environment for collective development and prosperity. That is our aim in Afghanistan and in the region. We value, therefore, the signing in Doha of the Trade, Transit and Investment Declaration, in furtherance of the Kabul Declaration. Pakistan would also like to see a greater integration of Afghanistan into regional economic cooperation structures. In that regard, we strongly support the gas pipeline project connecting Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. We also welcome all other initiatives aimed at economically integrating Afghanistan with its neighbours.

At the Tokyo Conference, Pakistan pledged $100 million over a five-year period towards Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. That assistance is being directed to areas identified by the Afghan Government and is channelled through its authority. A fact sheet containing the details of our assistance has been issued. In addition, we have extended further transit trade facilities to Afghanistan, including the removal of several items from the prohibited list, the simplification of customs procedures and a 25 to 30 per cent reduction in transportation costs and freight charges. We have offered Afghanistan expanded facilities at our new south-western port of Gwadar. Moreover, Pakistan is seriously considering ways to provide electricity to the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, as requested by the Afghan Government. Pakistan is also working with the Afghan Government to explore possibilities for private sector cooperation and investment opportunities, particularly in the areas of cement, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods.

In addition to assistance in relief and reconstruction, Pakistan has provided arms, ammunition and equipment for the Afghan National Army and training for the Army and Afghan police.

The first batch of Afghan diplomats recently completed their training at our Foreign Service Academy. We are also offering assistance in counter-narcotics and working with the Afghan authorities to strengthen border controls. Pakistan will continue to offer its fullest support to the Afghan Transitional Authority in all of its efforts aimed at peace, security, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. These are as important for Pakistan as they are for Afghanistan.

Over the last two decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, largely without appreciable assistance from the international community. We are pleased with the voluntary repatriation of a number of these refugees. However, we remain concerned over the slowing down of the repatriation process because of insecurity in Afghanistan and the lack of adequate economic activity for the returnees. We hope that the international community will target some of its recovery and reconstruction assistance for rural areas, from which most of the refugees originate. This would ensure that those who return home will have a reason to remain there.

In addition, we hope that the millions of Afghan refugees who remain in Pakistan and Iran will not be excluded from the historical constitutional and election

process in Afghanistan. We hope that these refugees, who still account for almost 10 per cent of Afghanistan's population, will be accorded commensurate representation in Afghanistan's future parliament.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Pakistan's full and unequivocal support for the Bonn process and President Hamid Karzai's Government. Pakistan supports Mr. Karzai's efforts aimed at national reconciliation and the reconstruction of his country. There can be no doubt that a strong, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan. Pakistan will spare no effort to achieve that goal. We reaffirm our resolve to work with the international community to promote peace, stability, reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Today, two years have passed since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. Much has been achieved. The process of a developing and a democratic society has started. A serious humanitarian crisis has been avoided. Reconstruction is under way.

However, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. The political and reconstruction agendas ahead are heavy, but manageable if the security situation does not block the way. Afghanistan's future depends on the three pillars of security, political process and reconstruction. It is vital to continue implementing the political objectives of the Bonn Agreement, a process that will culminate in the elections in 2004.

We have a common responsibility to ensure that the situation in Afghanistan is not overshadowed by other conflicts. Long-term commitment from the international community is of vital importance for peace and development in Afghanistan and the region.

A stable security situation is essential if Afghanistan is to succeed in holding fair elections. Norway welcomes Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) to expand the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mandate under the leadership of NATO. ISAF has a crucial role to play in securing stability in Kabul and other parts of the country. The challenge now is to live up to the expectations of the Afghan people in restoring a sustainable peace. Norway is making a substantial contribution to ISAF. Due to the need for increased security during the Constitutional Loya Jirga, Norway has recently deployed a company of some 200 personnel.

However, extending security to the provinces is key if the peace process is to become irreversible. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept might be a way forward in facilitating dialogue between the Afghan Transitional Authority and regional leaders and by assisting and monitoring implementation of security sector reform. Norway is at the moment looking into possible contributions to the PRTs.

The fragile security situation underscores the need for a multiethnic national army, a police force under civilian control and functioning justice system. We urge the Afghan Transitional Authority to complete the reform of the Ministry of the Defence, which are essential if the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is going to succeed. Factional leaders must come under the control of the central Government. While Afghan ownership is essential, the international community must provide long-term substantial support to security sector reforms.

The increasing number of attacks on humanitarian aid workers and United Nations staff — the majority of them Afghans — are unacceptable. When United Nations and humanitarian personnel are seen as targets in conflicts, we are faced with serious problems. A concerted effort is needed to reverse a trend that runs counter to the most basic tenets of international humanitarian law and raises fundamental questions that need to be addressed on an urgent basis.

In Afghanistan, both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations have raised concerns about the mixing of military and civilian roles. This complex issue requires careful scrutiny and underscores the importance of defining roles in fragile post-conflict situations.

Special Representative Brahimi must be commended for his tireless efforts. Norway fully supports the concepts of an integrated United Nations mission and a light international footprint.

The United Nations must have a key role in preparing the elections for next year. It is of vital importance that the forthcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga and the elections add legitimacy to the political process and contribute to unifying the various factions of Afghan society. Therefore, the Afghan Transitional Authority should initiate a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans.

Norway welcomes the progress made in the human rights field, including the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservations and the work of the Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan. However, more remains to be done. The main responsibility for addressing human rights issues lies with the Afghan Transitional Authority. The serious security situation aggravates human rights conditions in many parts of the country. Women are still the main victims. Their access to public life is still limited and their lives and dignity are still threatened. Norway is ready to work as a partner with Afghanistan in the implementation of the CEDAW.

The expanding drug economy is a serious threat, not only in Afghanistan, but in the region as a whole. If the producers and traffickers are allowed to thrive, the consequences will be devastating far beyond the borders of Afghanistan, including in many of our own societies. This will increase political instability and hamper sustainable economic growth, while strengthening the culture of corruption. Norway welcomes the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy. There is a need for a multidimensional approach, by both taking into account alternative livelihoods programmes and strengthening law enforcement.

Long-term reconstruction and socio-economic development are key challenges. The donor community must deliver to make the peace process irreversible. There is an increasing frustration among the Afghan people regarding the lack of peace dividends, in particular in the provinces.

Norway welcomes the Afghan development budget presented this year. It clearly reflects Afghan ownership. We urge the Afghan Transitional Authority to fully integrate women's issues and provide Afghan children with educational and health facilities in all parts of the country, recognizing the special needs of girls. Afghanistan is one of the major recipients of Norwegian development assistance and humanitarian aid. All the assistance allocated for 2003, approximately $50 million, has already been disbursed. Next year, pending parliamentary approval, Afghanistan will be designated one of our long-term partner countries in development cooperation.

Norway is a strong supporter of joint financing mechanisms such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) for strengthening Afghan ownership and transparency and ensuring the functioning of basic state institutions. Afghan leadership can only be supported through strengthening Government, not by sidelining it. We have therefore channelled a substantial part of our assistance to ARTF and we urge other donors to follow suit.

Nevertheless, continued international assistance is dependent upon Afghan commitment to the Bonn process. The main responsibility for finding a lasting political solution lies with the Afghan people. It is important not to lose momentum. We should therefore seriously consider President Karzai's wish to convene a follow-up conference to the Bonn process.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Bangladesh congratulates the Afghan Transitional Authority headed by President Hamid Karzai for its tireless efforts to fulfil its mandate under the Bonn Agreement. We also praise the brave and resilient Afghan people, who seized the opportunity to rebuild their nation. From all walks of life, they have journeyed far to take ownership of the peace process agreed in Bonn. We hail them for taking yet another major step forward on the road to democracy and pluralism by drafting a national constitution. As we speak today, Afghanis all over the country are registering as voters in preparation for the 2004 general elections.

We are also particularly heartened to see that Afghan children — girls and boys — have gone back to school. More than 2 million Afghan refugees have returned home and are integrating into the mainstream of society. After decades of marginalization, Afghan women are actively participating in the transitional political process and in the drafting of the constitution. We welcome Afghanistan's decision to become a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and also to one of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A national human rights commission and a judicial reform commission are in full operation. The newly formed Afghan National Army, police force and border patrol guards are deployed and functioning. Those are important institutional steps forward in promoting and protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law and consolidating national sovereignty. The hope for a better, more peaceful and prosperous future is clearly on the horizon.

Yet there is no room for complacency. The hard-earned peace and stability in Afghanistan remain fragile and at great risk. The people of Afghanistan yearn for total security so that they may enjoy the dividends of peace, but the relentless jockeying for power, factional fighting and illegal drug trade must first be halted if national reconciliation and unity is to evolve. We urge Afghans to stop their in-fighting. They must cooperate with the international community in its endeavour, which will bring solace and succour to their future generations. No nation has deserved such blessings more.

The safety of United Nations and associated personnel is of paramount importance. It is a prerequisite for humanitarian aid to reach the Afghan people, for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and demining to be carried out and for reconstruction and development to take place. The brutal killing of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees personnel from France and many more from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cannot be and must not be condoned.

We welcome the expansion by the Security Council of the mandate of ISAF beyond Kabul. It was timely and reassuring for all concerned, most particularly for the Afghan people. So was the recent visit by the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, led by Germany. We commend NATO and many of its member States that have contributed men and material to ISAF. They have displayed great courage and strong leadership.

Bangladesh pays high tribute to the gifted leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We laud the invaluable contribution of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to promote peace and stability in that country. The United Nations development and humanitarian team, led by Mr. Mark Malloch Brown also deserves special praise.

We thank all donors and friends of Afghanistan who have come forward to rebuild its institutions, to assist in combating illicit production and trade in drugs and to help millions of Afghan refugees return to their motherland. The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and the European Union, among others, deserve special mention in that regard. Commendations are also due to countries of the region, such as Pakistan and Iran, for hosting millions of Afghan refugees.

The people of Bangladesh stand shoulder to shoulder with their traditional Afghan brethren in their quest for peace, stability, democracy and development — despite our many and varied constraints. In January 2002, we dispatched $1 million in emergency assistance to our Afghan friends. But, more importantly, as a vibrant, pluralist democracy of 130 million people, we have shared some of our national social successes with the people of Afghanistan, such as microcredit, non-formal primary education and the empowerment of women. Our non-governmental organizations and civil society have been, albeit quietly and unobtrusively, transmitting to the Afghan people the values that we believe are invaluable to post-conflict developing societies. Such values include, but are not limited to, gender-mainstreaming, food for education of the girl child, economic empowerment of women and health and immunization of the mother and the child. It is our firm conviction that the empowerment of women is crucial to Afghanistan's future and to marginalizing extremist and irrational thought and action.

There must also be a South-South sharing of best practices in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The eight areas identified by the conference on South-South cooperation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, held in New Delhi, should receive the renewed attention of the United Nations and the countries of the South. We would be happy to contribute to that end.

Bangladesh remains convinced that continued, strong and credible international support for the Afghan people and for the Transitional Authority in strengthening the ongoing political, economic and security processes, is a sine qua non for achieving lasting peace and stability in that volatile region. There must be no let-up in the reconstruction efforts and those processes must be inclusive, sustainable and irreversible. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and the socio-cultural values of the Afghans must be respected if a truly pluralistic, multi-ethnic and representative Afghan society is to evolve through national reconciliation. Afghans and Afghans only must determine their own future. It must be designed, driven and implemented by them.

The people of Afghanistan have suffered far too much for far too long. We must help the Afghans help

themselves. The draft resolutions we have sponsored will, in our view, further the achievement of that goal. We applaud Germany's role in bringing the two draft resolutions to fruition.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to Afghanistan for the valuable work that has been carried out in respect of Afghanistan despite the complexity of the issue and the difficult conditions encountered there on a daily basis. We also thank the Security Council mission to Afghanistan for its report on the visit carried out from 31 October to 7 November 2003. My delegation finds the report to be very informative and helpful in enhancing our understanding of the situation in Afghanistan.

My delegation finds it quite disturbing that the security situation in many parts of Afghanistan continues to be serious in spite of the ouster of the Taliban regime two years ago. The remnants of the former regime have apparently regrouped and begun to cause problems to the interim Government, the population and the international presence in the country. The group allied to Hekmatyar has also been reported to have caused additional difficulties, especially in areas immediately beyond Kabul. The fact that warlords continue to hold sway in most parts of the country and that the interim Government is only able to project its authority within Kabul and its vicinity should be a matter of continuing concern to the international community.

Security is the most important aspect that needs to be addressed in Afghanistan if the country is to have any reasonable prospect of success in its nation-building efforts, in particular in promoting good governance and undertaking reconstruction efforts. In this regard, security and economic assistance from the international community remains crucial. My delegation fully supports the recommendation of the Security Council mission that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) be strengthened so that it can be deployed beyond Kabul. The bold action taken by Germany to deploy their troops to Konduz is commendable and should be duplicated elsewhere by other ISAF elements.

My delegation is very much encouraged that in spite of the uncertain security situation, progress has been achieved in many fields in Afghanistan over the past year. In this regard, the efforts undertaken by the interim Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and various non-governmental organizations should be commended. We note the serious efforts undertaken by President Karzai and his Government, operating under difficult circumstances. Malaysia had the privilege of welcoming President Karzai twice this year to attend the XIII Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur in February and the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Putrajaya in October.

The year 2003 has proven to be a significant year for Afghanistan in its efforts to reinstate democracy. The publication of a Draft Constitution, as announced on 9 November 2003, is a most welcomed development and certainly a strong manifestation of the struggle of the Afghan people to effect change and genuinely build strong and credible democratic institutions. Malaysia sincerely hopes that the Loya Jirga will be able to deliberate on the Draft Constitution expeditiously and successfully. We note that work is being undertaken in preparing for nationwide elections next year, although some sections of the population, particularly those of the Pashtun region, may not be able to be fully registered as voters because of the prevailing security situation. This could result in their disenfranchisement and lead to further problems in the future. The current security situation may also impact on the conduct of the elections. Hence, it is imperative that the international community sustain its presence in Afghanistan and maintain assistance to the country.

My delegation hopes that the future elected Government of Afghanistan will have the full capacity to implement its national policies so as to serve the interest of the country's multi-ethnic communities. In addition, priority should be given to enhancing the well-being and advancement of the vulnerable sectors of Afghan society, namely, women and children. Women should be entrusted with key roles. By the same token, children should be provided with adequate access to proper education, health care and nutrition.

Malaysia notes that the drug problem remains a major concern, especially with the resumption of poppy cultivation by Afghan farmers. This situation must be reversed without delay. The farmers must be provided with alternative crops to cultivate that can ensure good returns. Simultaneously, the international community should work in concert to stop the drug lords from

exporting illicit drugs and making them available on the global market and possibly using the proceeds for terrorist activities.

My delegation supports the call for donor countries to continue to make funds available for the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. We note with satisfaction the outcome of the Conference on Consolidation of Peace: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Afghanistan held in Tokyo on 22 February 2003 in support of Afghanistan's initiative through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. We welcome the indispensable role played by the donor countries and the United Nations Development Programme in coordinating the DDR initiative. Malaysia stands ready to cooperate in this regard.

In Malaysia's capacity as Chairman of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), my delegation wishes to reiterate the unflinching commitment of Malaysia and the other NAM member States towards Afghanistan, as reflected in the Final Document of the XIII NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur last February. In this connection, the Movement is resolved to contribute to Afghanistan's reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

There is no doubt that the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan will be a difficult and challenging one. My delegation is confident, nonetheless, that with the collective resolve and commitment of the United Nations and the international community in providing assistance towards nation-building, reconstruction, democratization and governance, the situation will gradually improve. On this note, my delegation is pleased to join the other delegations in sponsoring the draft resolution on this important question that has just been introduced by the Permanent Representative of Germany, to whom we express our deep appreciation.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly gathers here today to continue its deliberations on the development of the situation in Afghanistan. These developments still enjoy international attention on the part of the international community, not only because of their immediate impact on international peace and security, but also because we continue to look forward to rebuilding the Afghan society and State based on full respect of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

Egypt has been closely following the efforts exerted by the Afghan transitional Administration and welcomes the progress made in several fields with the support of the international community, as is shown by the Security Council mission's report on Afghanistan. We are, however, concerned about the challenges that may befall the political and peace process if those challenges are not dealt with seriously enough and their root causes are not remedied within the framework of the unity of purpose and national destiny of the Afghan people. In this context, we would like to affirm that the international community looks forward to establishing a multilateral and pluralistic democratic State in Afghanistan that would take into consideration all factions of society in its decision-making and that believes in the rule of law and the constitution and respect for human rights, and maintains relations of good-neighbourliness and respect for the principles of international law. This cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of instability, tension and lack of security. While we welcome Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) to expand the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as a supporting element of the efforts of the transitional Government in spreading its authority and jurisdiction all over the country, we stress the importance of strengthening and reforming the security sector and of intensifying reconstruction efforts and political and constitutional reform to ensure the creation of a suitable environment that would help to restore security and stability as soon as possible and build the foundations of a fledgling Afghan Government on solid ground.

We pay tribute to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and other members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people achieve security. Egypt calls, within the framework of the United Nations, for the expansion of the work of that Mission, which plays a pivotal role in Afghanistan. In this respect, we believe that a number of points must be taken into consideration if we are to achieve the goal of rebuilding Afghanistan. First of all, the primary responsibility for peace and a political solution in Afghanistan lies with the Afghan people alone.

Secondly, we reaffirm the right of all the Afghan people to participate in public and political life, taking into consideration, as in other societies, the cultural and religious characteristics of Afghan society.

Thirdly, the international community is called upon to provide considerable financial and moral support for the political process and for reconstruction efforts in all sectors of the Afghan State.

Fourthly, the process of creating a strong Afghan army that represents all factions of society and is capable of providing security and stability and of protecting the borders must be speeded up.

Fifthly, the formation of a just and effective judicial system must be accelerated, so that the rule of law and respect for the constitution can be ensured as soon as possible, and those responsible for human rights violations are held accountable. Sixthly and lastly, there is a need to take strong action to deal with all those who are involved in the production and distribution of drugs. International assistance must be provided to the transitional administration in their efforts to combat the spread of drugs.

Mr. Nambiar (India): A review of the political situation and of progress in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan assumes the utmost importance in the light of the efforts under way to construct a vibrant, stable and economically self-sufficient democracy in the country after decades of instability and misrule. We therefore welcome this opportunity to participate in the discussion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Today marks the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan. Few would contest the scope and depth of the changes that have taken place in Afghanistan since then. Foremost among them has been the implantation of the seeds of democratic values in Afghanistan. The enunciation of those values began with the convening of the Loya Jirga. They were reinforced by the recent release of the draft constitution ahead of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and we all hope that this process will culminate in the holding of presidential and general elections.

India has supported the political process in Afghanistan as the best way of ensuring the stability of the country and the economic and social development of its people. Adherence to the implementation schedule laid down in the Bonn Agreement has been a strong indicator of the success of the political process so far. It is important that the time lines relating to implementation of the remaining milestones in the political process be maintained. This will demonstrate the resolve of the international community to remain steadfast against the attempts of Taliban remnants and other interests to derail the process.

The development of national institutions, the introduction of economic and fiscal systems and the commencement of economic programmes and reconstruction activities are all indicators of the rapid progress that has been achieved in Afghanistan over the past two years. The credit for these achievements must go necessarily to the people of Afghanistan, led by President Hâmid Karzai and his Government. They have received the steadfast support of the international community in their efforts.

Unfortunately, the strong desire and will of the Afghan people to propel themselves and their country out of the dark ages of Taliban rule into the twenty-first century by adopting the political, economic and social systems of the current age have been obstructed by the same regressive forces that have held back the country in recent decades. The threat posed by the regrouping of Taliban cadres and their sympathizers, particularly in the south and south-eastern parts of the country, has been highlighted in all of the Secretary-General's recent reports on Afghanistan and in the debates held in the Security Council.

The Security Council mission, which returned from Afghanistan last month, concluded, in paragraph 3 of its report (S/2003/1074), that "insecurity caused by terrorist activities, factional fights and drug-related crime" remained the major concern of the Afghans. One of the main recommendations of the mission was that all neighbours of Afghanistan should fully implement the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002 and redouble their efforts, in particular within the framework of the tripartite commission, to preserve peace and security, especially in the southern and south-eastern areas.

Terrorism and the systematic campaign to target international organizations, aid agencies and non-governmental organizations represent a direct challenge to the efforts of the Afghan Government to assert its control throughout that country. They also undermine efforts to rehabilitate sections of the Afghan population that have been particularly vulnerable to the instability that has plagued the country in the past. The Security Council mission report notes, in paragraph 22, that these threats have "significantly slowed reconstruction by limiting the access of government,

international humanitarian and development agencies." It concludes that long-term stability for Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the neighbouring States.

Another area of particular concern is the issue of drugs in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has drawn attention to the surge in drug cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan. What is particularly alarming is the fact that a small area of Afghanistan, mainly concentrated on its southern and south-eastern borders, has the capacity to supply almost three quarters of the heroin sold in Europe and virtually all the heroin sold in Russia. Also disconcerting are the linkages between drug trafficking and terrorism. A conference on drugs held in Paris in May highlighted the nexus between drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism, and recommended urgent, swift and coordinated action to address the problem.

At this critical stage in Afghanistan's development, the continued support and assistance of the international community is vital. Economic development and reconstruction activities must go hand in hand with efforts to check attempts by the Taliban and other negative forces to regroup within the country.

India has continued to contribute to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. Despite other calls on our resources, we have committed up to $270 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have undertaken, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, projects in a number of sectors, ranging from transportation, airlines and telecommunications, to health, education and agriculture. India has also offered the Afghan Government and people expertise in areas such as information technology, the judiciary and police training. As part of its assistance activities, India has initiated work on some major infrastructure projects in power transmission, hydro-electricity, irrigation and road construction. India has undertaken its programme of economic assistance in Afghanistan with a firm belief in Afghan ownership.

In our view, external efforts should reinforce and support Afghan aspirations and decisions. The edifice of an independent and stable Afghanistan can only be established if Afghanistan can maintain normal and friendly relations with all States, particularly its neighbours, but without any country claiming special rights over the people or territory of Afghanistan. India's relations with Afghanistan are based on mutually supportive bilateral relations. It is our aim and endeavour to strengthen the natural and historical process in the region as a means of contributing to its stability and development.

Afghanistan is at a delicate crossroads between regression and modernity, anarchy and stability, darkness and light. The fate of the Afghan people is inextricably linked to the security and stability of the international community, as evident in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. There is no choice before the international community other than to support the Afghan Government and people in their endeavour to place their country beyond the shadows of its recent past.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Turkey has already aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. In light of Turkey's deep-rooted historical and friendly ties with Afghanistan, I am taking the floor to further highlight a number of points with regard to my country's views concerning the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Turkey is a sponsor of the present draft resolution, which we think honestly reflects both the successes achieved and the setbacks encountered in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

The latter part of the draft resolution, which deals with the humanitarian issues, is as important as the former, which addresses the political and security questions. We hope that the text as a whole relays a strong message of solidarity with the Afghan people and reaffirms, at the same time, the determination and commitment of the international community to alleviate the human suffering of the Afghans.

We strongly deplore the resurgence of violence in Afghanistan during the past few months. Not only the elements of Operation Enduring Freedom, but several non-governmental organizations and the United Nations itself have been targeted causing tragic losses of life. We condemn, once again, terrorism in all its forms. Those acts of violence, along with the existing tensions in the country, show that we need to enhance forthwith the conditions of security and stability.

In doing so, Sir, we must heed the cardinal principle of the indivisibility of security. Security issues in Afghanistan should be handled from a

comprehensive perspective, lest we should see the vacuums created by our own hands filled with forces of destruction. In that vein, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has to move cautiously and avoid creating privileged exemptions and intolerable imbalances during its implementation.

Turkey welcomes and supports the assumption of the command and coordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by NATO. The expansion of the authority of ISAF throughout the country responds to the rational needs of security as Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) also attests.

NATO has now appointed Mr. Hikmet Çetin, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, as its Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan. While welcoming that decision, given our country's special relationship with the Afghan people, we wish him every success.

We follow closely the ongoing political reconstruction process in Afghanistan. As may be recalled, the Bonn process is envisaged to embrace the whole of the country, and as such, its main principle is to safeguard equal opportunity to all entities so that they can be represented in governmental structures. The beleaguered history of Afghanistan proves that no single group should attempt to prevail over the others.

Hence, we regard equitable distribution of rights and privileges, along with the resulting responsibilities, as of paramount importance for achieving harmonious transition to the stability that the Afghan people deserve. Likewise, we call upon all groups in the country to pursue policies that fit with the general agenda of Afghanistan, and not solely their own ends as they see fit.

It is evident that the firm commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and the Afghan people should continue. I commend the untiring and dedicated work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the toil of the Afghan Transitional Administration in responding to the challenges of this historic moment, and reiterate the active commitment of the Turkish Government to the security, reconstruction and welfare of Afghanistan.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): It is indeed crucial and timely for the General Assembly to debate the situation in Afghanistan today, a few days before an important event, the convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Needless to say, the finalization of the constitutional process is a cornerstone for restoring Afghanistan's statehood. Unprecedented in the history of that country, long torn by war, that process will require painstaking efforts, patience, tolerance and a firm and shared commitment to peace on the part of the Afghan people.

Ultimately, the key to the success of that process is the will of the Afghan people. We are therefore particularly pleased to express our deepest gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for their consistent and continued efforts in supporting Afghanistan at this critical juncture of Afghan history.

The work done during the last two years by the Transitional Administration in implementing the Bonn Agreement is impressive. A visible sign of progress can be found in almost every sphere where the United Nations is involved, specifically in the successful campaign to get children back to school, in the introduction of a new Afghan currency, in restoration of the financial system, in an increase in agricultural production and in the massive voluntary return of refugees to their homeland — the world's largest such return, in the last 30 years.

Ukraine welcomes the gradual and irreversible re-establishment of Government institutions in the country. At the same time we all know that Afghanistan still faces acute security problems. We are deeply concerned with the possibility of a relapse into the warlord culture and lawlessness in some parts of the country and hope that measures taken by the central Government will bring positive results.

In that connection we would like to stress the importance for regional security of full adherence by Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, first of all, to the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the Afghan State and to the provisions of the 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations (S/2002/1416, annex).

It is evident that cooperation with and support from the international community at this stage remain equally important. It is therefore absolutely imperative to help maintain security, at least in key areas. Ukraine

welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1510 (2003), which expands the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force. We look forward to its swift implementation.

Ukraine also expresses its full support for the efforts of the international community towards the creation of a national Afghan army and police force that would be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the Afghan people. We commend the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Italy and other nations for their leading role in providing the necessary training. We commend the Government of Japan for its assistance to the demobilization programmes. In our view, a clear plan of activities for new security institutions should be worked out.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan depend to a large extent on the international community's sustained engagement in providing funding for humanitarian assistance and for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. The resources of major international organizations and donor nations, as well as the capabilities of neighbouring countries, should be engaged more vigorously, as they are indispensable to improving the post-conflict situation.

We are pleased to note the reaffirmation by the donor community at the Dubai meetings on 21 September 2003 of its commitments regarding Afghanistan. I would also like to stress the readiness of my Government to provide assistance within the relevant United Nations programmes, and to share with the Afghan authorities our experience in such spheres as mine clearance, rehabilitation of transport, irrigation and mining systems and energy transportation.

The fight against the production of illegal drugs is yet another task which calls for special attention on the part of the international community. Ukraine shares the concerns about the increased opium cultivation in Afghanistan, which threatens peace and security in the region and provides traffickers and terrorists with a major source of income. That issue is of considerable concern for Ukraine as it is a potential transit country. It is regrettable that the comprehensive anti-narcotics strategy, including the provision of alternative livelihoods to poppy cultivation, has faltered this year. We reiterate our full support for the Transitional Administration's decision to ban poppy production, and we praise its commitment to fight opium cultivation. Still, we believe that the country needs greater international assistance in developing its law enforcement capacity and in providing opium-growing farmers with alternative means of livelihood.

We are pleased to sponsor the draft resolution (A/58/L.32) on Afghanistan prepared by the delegation of Germany, a country which continues to play an outstanding role in the Afghan peace process. We believe that the draft resolution is yet another manifestation of the international community's support for the goal of establishing a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Finally, I would like to stress — and in fact to propose — that we should ask the Secretary-General to convey the content of our discussion today and of the draft resolution that we are about to adopt to President Hamid Karzai of the Transitional Administration of Afghanistan as a message of support from the international community to the Afghan people.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Over the past two years, the Afghan people, led by President Karzai and assisted by the international community, have gone a long way towards getting rid of the Taliban and discarding or isolating terrorists and extremists who once held a reign of terror over their country. A new path towards the political and economic reconstruction of the country has been embarked upon, and several important milestones in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement have already been passed.

At the present time, we are at yet another critical juncture in the political process. Having witnessed a number of positive developments, such as the successful launch of a new national currency, some advancement in reconstruction projects, progress in the reform of the security sector and the start of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration campaign, we welcome the release of a draft constitution and the preparations for the Constitutional Loya Jirga. The start of the voter registration drive in preparation for general elections is another welcome development. Moreover, we are pleased that, over the past two years, all Afghans have displayed a great deal of interest and perseverance in upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their nation.

However, major challenges still lie ahead, and the political process has yet to be made secure and irreversible. Insecurity, factional discord and narcotic

drug production continue to take their toll on peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida who are attempting to regroup and conduct acts of subversion mainly in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, are responsible for most of the insecurity. Attacks on Government officials and international aid workers are destabilizing the situation in those areas and hindering reconstruction activities. We especially condemn the recent attacks on United Nations offices and staff members and the murder of a French member of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which led to the removal of 30 foreign United Nations staff members from large areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan and the closing of refugee reception centres in four provinces.

Subversive activities are all the more dangerous because they also aim at depriving parts of the population, notably in the majority Pashtun areas, of the ability to exercise their right to fully take part in the political process. While we stress the need for all Afghan ethnic groups, including the Pashtuns, to be able to fully enjoy their rights as Afghan citizens and to be proportionately represented in the central Government, we believe that the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida should not be allowed to disrupt and delay the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

Narcotics-related activities are another major concern for the Afghans, and for many other countries, including mine. Despite sincere efforts by the Afghan Government, we have witnessed an increasing trend in the production and trafficking in drugs and a growing narcotics economy that remains largely unchecked. It is alarming that, as found by a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime survey last October, opium poppy cultivation has spread to new areas of Afghanistan and the total area involved nationwide has risen. It is obvious that the production of thousands of metric tons of opium and its derivatives this year could adversely affect the legal economy and threaten reconstruction activities and the smooth progress of the political process.

As the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida are among the major beneficiaries of the drug money, there is an absolute need for the international community to assist the Government in the implementation of its comprehensive national drug control strategy, including institution-building, strengthening law enforcement and promoting alternative livelihoods. As it is also a proven fact that the fight against the traffic in drugs is more effective and less costly along the Afghan borders, the international community should support the efforts made by Afghanistan's neighbouring States along trafficking routes to curb the flow of illicit drugs. My country is one of those that suffer enormously as a result of drugs coming out of Afghanistan. International support is indispensable if the Iranian Government is to sustain its ongoing resolute fight against drug trafficking.

Factional discord and its adverse impact on security and reconstruction in Afghanistan are a cause for concern. Moreover, there is an urgent need for the further expansion of the authority of the central Government throughout the country. The strengthening of the new national army, national police, border police and other central institutions, as well as the control of national revenue by Kabul, are of great importance. My Government has spared no effort in helping the Afghan Government in this respect. We offered — and in several instances used — our good offices in mitigating and resolving unrest in various parts of Afghanistan.

Likewise, my Government also fully appreciates the important role that the neighbouring countries can play in assisting the Afghan central Government to fulfil its tasks. In this respect, we are committed to the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002, and are doing our utmost to control our common border with Afghanistan. We are pleased to note that the Afghan provinces adjacent to Iranian territory are among the quietest and calmest. My Government is determined to continue its policy of assisting the Afghan people in their endeavour to rebuild their country, and is fulfilling the pledge undertaken at the Tokyo Conference.

Given the enormity of the task — especially after years of chaos and lawlessness — the Afghan people need all kinds of support from the international community — moral, political, economic or security-related. We, the members of the international community, should stay the course and help the Afghans carry the task through, despite the difficulties. The signs the Afghans receive from the outside world should be ones of encouragement and should be indicative of steadfast understanding and assistance. The international community at large, including all Afghanistan's neighbours, has a great deal at stake in

the context of the current trend. It needs to maintain it at all costs and ensure that it becomes irreversible.

Undoubtedly, the United Nations system, led by the Secretary-General, and the Special Representative, Ambassador Brahimi, have so far played an important central role in rebuilding Afghanistan — a role they should be greatly commended for.

Allow me to conclude by expressing our pleasure in sponsoring the draft resolution introduced by Germany, and our appreciation to the German delegation for its excellent work in carrying out the negotiations and consultations on the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.70

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

70th plenary meeting
Friday, 5 December 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 28 and 40 (*continued*)

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(f) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/616)

Draft resolution (A/58/L.32)

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Exactly two years ago in Bonn, a milestone agreement on Afghanistan was signed under the auspices of the United Nations, giving the Afghans an excellent chance to embark on the road to peaceful development, political stability and economic reconstruction. Since that time, the Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, has made great strides in its efforts to rebuild the country, devastated by over two decades of war.

After the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga and the establishment of the transitional Government, civilian order is being gradually introduced in Afghanistan. The draft constitution, based on democratic principles and the culture and traditions of the Afghan people, is another big step forward on the road to peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. The convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga will be the next important stage of post-war nation-building in Afghanistan, which will greatly promote national reconciliation and the establishment of viable institutions of State power.

The recent attack against the United Nations office in Kandahar is yet another reminder of the fragility of peace in Afghanistan. We share the Secretary-General's concern over the insecurity in the region. In our view, to make the peace process irreversible and to fully implement the Bonn Agreement, it is necessary to ensure that security becomes an essential part of the efforts to achieve national reconciliation and suppress terrorist activities and crimes related to drugs.

In this context, we welcome the stabilizing role and a broader mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Afghan people have hailed the decision to expand its mandate. We fully share the view of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, that full support from ISAF is required to implement the Afghan peace process and extend the authority of the central Government to all Afghan provinces.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Kazakhstan reiterates its unwavering support of the central role of the United Nations in the settlement of the Afghan problem. We believe that it is necessary to step up efforts to rehabilitate the economic infrastructure and create favourable conditions for the return of the Afghan refugees to their homes. In our view, long-term humanitarian assistance, culminating in the full implementation of the comprehensive plan for rebuilding the country's economy, is one of the most important tasks of the international community.

Kazakhstan has been providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. We are ready to continue to contribute to the efforts of the international community to build the social and economic infrastructure of that country.

The situation in Afghanistan remains high on the agenda of the Security Council, which continues to pay close attention to post-conflict peace-building in that country. The Council keeps under constant review the issues of security, political reforms and economic assistance to Afghanistan. In that context, we welcome the outcome of the recent Security Council mission to the country. It is symbolic that the Council members' visit coincided with the release of the draft constitution of Afghanistan, a cornerstone of the Bonn Agreement.

We note with satisfaction that the issue of security, which is of great importance for the people and the Government of the country, was the central theme of discussions during the Security Council mission's meeting with the representatives of Afghan society. We agree with the mission's main findings concerning the need to initiate the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan, to reform key Afghan institutions, to withdraw all armed factions from Kabul and to earmark additional funds to step up efforts to ensure security. We share the view that a follow-up conference to the Bonn process would provide a political impetus to work for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Drug production in and drug trafficking from Afghanistan remain a serious concern for Kazakhstan. We have underscored on numerous occasions the need to establish joint mechanisms to stem once and for all drug trafficking from that country and to allocate adequate resources to implement projects and programmes to combat the distribution of drugs. A comprehensive approach to this problem, based on an integrated international strategy coordinated by the United Nations, is needed to effectively address the drug threat.

We believe that the United Nations, through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, should pay more attention to the implementation of the programme against drug trafficking in Afghanistan as an effective strategy to battle illegal drug trafficking. The international community should also keep under constant review the continued efforts to eliminate terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan fully supports the efforts of the international community to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the situation in Afghanistan and actively promotes the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. We deeply believe that the Afghan problem can be solved effectively only through the joint efforts of all those concerned. As for Kazakhstan, it stands ready to make a tangible contribution to this process.

Kazakhstan is a sponsor of the draft resolution on Afghanistan, introduced today by the delegation of Germany. The unprecedented number of sponsors of that draft reflects the commitment of Member States to the Bonn process, with a view to building a new Afghanistan. Kazakhstan supports this important document related to international assistance for peace and security and the promotion of the normalization of the situation and economic reconstruction, in order to improve the life of the Afghan people.

My country will continue to support the efforts of the Government and people of Afghanistan to build an independent and peaceful society in which all Afghan citizens play an active role in the internal political life of the country.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I thank the President of the General Assembly for his initiative of convening this meeting in order to discuss this very important subject on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement.

During the last two years, much progress has been made, including the recent finalization of the draft constitution, among other achievements, and we commend all the parties involved in Afghanistan for their efforts. In order to further advance the political process in Afghanistan, the upcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga must be successful in producing concrete results which will pave the way for the election to be

held next year. I am confident that the further leadership of President Hamid Karzai and the continued efforts of all parties concerned will facilitate the attainment of those objectives.

Japan, determined that Afghanistan should not become politically destabilized and never revert to being a breeding ground for terrorism, continues to be actively involved in efforts to support its reconstruction in concert with the international community. Recently, Japan extended the term of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law for the purpose of enabling the Japanese Self-Defence Force vessels deployed in the Indian Ocean to continue to engage in replenishment activities in support of the "Operation Enduring Freedom" coalition fighting terrorism in Afghanistan.

At the Tokyo Conference in January 2002, Japan pledged to provide $500 million in assistance by June 2004. At this point, approximately $468 million, which amounts to more than 90 per cent of the pledged amount, has already been disbursed or allocated for specific projects, and the pace of allocation is accelerating. We are working hard to disburse the remaining $32 million in assistance as early as possible.

In addition, Japan decided last month to make an additional pledge of $20 million through its trust funds in the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, in an effort to respond to Afghanistan's urgent near-term needs. Furthermore, with respect to assistance after June 2004, Japan recently urged the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme to carry out a revised needs assessment for Afghanistan, on the basis of which we will consider future contributions that are commensurate with our international responsibilities.

Restoration of domestic security is indispensable to the advancement of the political process and the smooth implementation of international assistance. From this perspective, the recent trends in the overall security situation, which include the Taliban reunification movement, a shift in terrorist tactics to focus on soft targets such as humanitarian aid workers, the expansion of opium production and the glaring attacks against efforts to promote the rights of women are of grave concern to all of us. We need to seriously address this issue. In this connection, Japan welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) to allow the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to deploy in the provinces and assume additional duties. We strongly hope that, with support from Member States, ISAF will be able to step up its activities outside Kabul and thus contribute to the improvement of the security situation in the provinces.

Japan, taking the lead in tandem with the United Nations in supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes for ex-combatants, welcomes the start of the pilot phase of the DDR programme and reiterates its appeal to the international community to support it. In order to succeed, DDR must be implemented in a fair and equitable manner to ensure that it benefits the Afghan people as a whole and not only specific groups — as was emphasized by the Turkish representative this morning. The verification role of the International Observer Group (IOG) is extremely important in that respect. We highly appreciate the efforts of the IOG in the pilot phase. We urge the Transitional Administration and all Afghan groups to cooperate with the IOG and urge the international community to support it by financial and other means in order to move towards full-scale implementation of DDR programmes.

It is essential that the political process, improvement of domestic security and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance be advanced in a balanced manner. All three elements are interlinked. The current grave security situation risks delaying and even placing in jeopardy the ongoing political and reconstruction processes. The United Nations is now under criticism from various quarters, but it is extremely important for it to rigorously follow through on a task once embarked upon in order to maintain its authority. The United Nations has taken a forceful initiative to help Afghanistan escape conditions of coercion, poverty and conflict and to become a democratic and peaceful State with bright prospects for the future. Achieving that objective is extremely important for Afghanistan and for the United Nations as well. In sponsoring and strongly endorsing the draft resolution presented here, we wish to re-emphasize the importance of remaining focused on our commitment to making the utmost effort to realize that goal.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Two years that passed since signing of the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan represent a short period from a historical viewpoint. It is all the more impressive that significant results were achieved in such a short time. The peace process in Afghanistan

continues to unfold, the new authorities are getting stronger, and issues related to State construction and socio-economic rehabilitation are being addressed. The territory of Afghanistan is no longer a beachhead for international terrorism and is no longer a threat to its neighbours.

At the same time, the Afghan settlement is going through serious problems at this crucial stage, which will determine to a great extent whether the reforms become irreversible or a danger arises that the country will slip into the quagmire of internecine warfare.

The Constitutional Loya Jirga, which is to lay down a basis for a form of government and to open the way for general democratic elections, will be a milestone in the political life of the country. We expect the Afghan people to approach this event with great responsibility and to take advantage of the historic chance to ensure the unity of their State on the basis of respect for the interests of all ethnic groups and compliance with fundamental legal norms and human freedoms.

The increase in the subversive activity of extremists, including the remaining followers of the former Taliban regime, poses a serious threat to the stability and advancement of the peace process. It is quite obvious that these enemies of the Afghan nation and the international community are trying to hamper the reform process and again plunge the country into the chaos of war. We believe it is necessary to carefully see to it that the former active henchmen of the Taliban are not allowed into the new States structures. We are convinced that it can be done without harm to the process of reconciliation in Afghan society.

We attach great importance to the consistent compliance with the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations by the signatory States. All other countries should provide assistance in the implementation of the Declaration.

One should be very cautious when it comes to the reform of the armed forces and the whole range of security related issues in Afghanistan. On the one hand, it is necessary to seek a balanced representation of the ethnic groups in law enforcement agencies. On the other hand, it is necessary to rely on those forces that have proven their commitment to building a new Afghanistan and to fight the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. We welcome the international efforts to establish an Afghan national army.

This year Russia made its contribution to these efforts by supplying the armed forces of Afghanistan with fuel, automobiles, communications equipment, spare parts for automobiles and armoured vehicles and other military equipment worth approximately $50 million. At this stage the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is a key factor in ensuring security in Afghanistan. It is evident that in order to stabilize the situation throughout the Afghan territory ISAF should expand its presence beyond Kabul, first of all into the southern and south-east areas. We welcome the German decision to create an "ISAF island" in Kunduz. For the purposes of contributing to better security in Afghanistan, the Russian Government allowed for the transit of military equipment for ISAF through Russian territory.

The threat of narcotics coming from the Afghan territory continues unabated. According to the report of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, presented in Moscow on 29 October, production of drugs and illegal drug trafficking from Afghanistan continue to increase. This highlights once again the need for active work, both inside Afghanistan and along its borders, to establish reliable security belts which would serve as a deterrent to drug trafficking.

A lot is yet to be done in the areas of reconstruction and rehabilitation. It is important to ensure that the contributions announced at numerous donor conferences be allocated and delivered to the Afghan people to improve the quality of their life. Russia is ready to play an active part in the international efforts to rehabilitate the Afghan economy. Using the experience from the 1960s to the 1980s when, due to the economic assistance of the former Soviet Union, 142 facilities were built in Afghanistan, including natural gas production facilities in the north of the country, a nitrogen fertilizer plant in Mazar-i-Sharif, a hydroelectric power station, the Kabul airport, the Salang Tunnel and others, we believe it would be useful to combine these demonstrated Russian technologies and experience with the financial support of donor countries.

The United Nations should continue to play its central coordinating role in international efforts in Afghanistan. We support the active work by Secretary-General's Special Representative head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Given that the Bonn peace process schedule will be completed with the holding of general

elections in Afghanistan, it would be appropriate to hold another representative international conference that would develop parameters for the involvement of the international community at the next stage of the Afghan peace process.

We believe it would be useful to keep the work on Afghanistan within the General Assembly and the Security Council. Decisions adopted by these two bodies are complementary; they do not duplicate each other. We support the draft resolution on Afghanistan prepared by a wide group of sponsors and presented by Germany. We hope that if it is adopted by consensus, it will add to the consolidated efforts being taken by the international community in the interest of the rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): Two years ago, the global war against international terrorism was first waged in Afghanistan. Today, Afghanistan not only serves as a front line in this global war, but also as a test case as to whether democracy and freedom can thrive in a land once controlled by an intolerant regime. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to remain seriously engaged in rebuilding Afghanistan and therefore timely that we, the international community, focus our attention yet again on Afghanistan through the concurrent consideration of agenda items 28 and 40 (f) at the plenary of the General Assembly.

In this regard, Thailand welcomes the report issued by the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (A/57/850) and the report of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan from 31 October to 7 November 2003 (S/2003/1074).

These two documents point out two general trends. On the one hand, there has been progress in the Bonn process and we look forward to the national elections scheduled for next year. On the other hand, Afghanistan continues to be plagued by problems of security, stemming from terrorist activities, factional fights and drug-related crimes.

At the end of the day, further sustainable progress on all fronts in Afghanistan will depend to a great extent on the improvement in the security situation and the continued support of the international community to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Failure to address either the security challenges or the assistance and rehabilitation needs of the Afghan people would certainly undermine the investment made by the international community in Afghanistan thus far.

We therefore assemble here today to renew our political commitment to an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours, where its peoples can enjoy the fruits of democracy, stability and prosperity. We are here to help ensure that this important test case of United Nations post-conflict nation rebuilding succeeds. In this connection, I should like to express our gratitude to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as staff of UNAMA, for their tireless efforts in helping the Afghan Transitional Administration rebuild the country.

Restoration of security, expansion of Government authority and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) urgently need to be accomplished. The expansion of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to areas beyond Kabul should help address some of the security concerns. But it is equally important to address the economic and social needs of the Afghan people through the restoration of their livelihoods, rebuilding the economic infrastructure and addressing the drug related challenges to Afghan society.

With that in mind, during the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo in 2002, Thailand pledged to assist Afghanistan in areas where we have some expertise, such as infrastructure rebuilding, demining activities and alternative development programmes, including crop substitution.

So far, the Thai commitment to assisting Afghanistan has been realized through various specific activities. Between March and September 2003, Thai military engineers and demining experts were dispatched to Afghanistan to undertake the humanitarian mission of renovating Bagram airport.

A high-level Afghan delegation led by His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Alam Razam, Minister for Light Industry and Foodstuffs of Afghanistan, paid a study visit to Thailand between July and August 2003, and paid courtesy calls on the Prime Minister of Thailand and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand to discuss issues of cooperation. The delegation also visited the Doi Tung Royal

Development Project in northern Thailand in order to get first-hand experience with alternative development programmes, including opium eradication, crop substitution and other agricultural development projects.

Thailand is also arranging human resources development programmes in response to the needs of the Afghan people in areas where Thailand has some expertise, such as agriculture, rural development, small- and medium-size enterprises and vocational training. Plans are underway to send a Thai technical mission to Afghanistan next year to map out those human resources development programmes. In order to provide a framework for those cooperation activities, Thailand is working towards normalizing relations with Afghanistan.

Thailand is looking beyond the current difficulties faced by Afghanistan and towards the future, to a time when Afghanistan will be ready to engage in active partnership with the international community. Once peace and security have been restored nationwide in Afghanistan, the foundation will be laid for a brighter future of sustained economic, social and cultural progress. Thailand is therefore seeking to build a mutually beneficial partnership with Afghanistan and is exploring possible areas of cooperation, including the field of aviation, the development of new markets and the restoration of Buddhist religious sites.

But this future Afghanistan will arrive only if the international community remains steadfast in its commitment to help Afghanistan effectively resolve the challenges of the present. The draft resolutions under these agenda items are expressions of this commitment, for which Thailand is proud to be a sponsor.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): I would like first to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his latest reports on Afghanistan and commend the tireless efforts of his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We are also gratified by the report of the Security Council mission on their visit to Afghanistan from 31 October to 7 November 2003.

In commemorating the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement today, the international community can take great satisfaction in the fact that several of its benchmarks have been met. Progress has been most visible with the reopening of schools, construction of roads and the launching of a new currency. We particularly welcome developments in the political sector, including the promulgation of the draft Constitution, and the political processes underway for the holding of general elections next year. Such developments offer hope to the Afghan people that, despite the formidable obstacles that abound, the goal of establishing a broad-based, multi-ethnic and democratic Government is within reach.

While significant progress has been made during the past two years, the enormous complexities of post-conflict Afghanistan pose the most challenging problems in the areas of security, good governance and reconstruction. It should be pointed out that the current inadequate peace, as evidenced by the deteriorating conditions in some parts of the country, has been disquieting to the Afghan population.

It is clear from the visit of the Security Council mission that terrorism, factionalism, and drug production and trafficking are the three major sources of instability. My delegation deeply regrets the senseless acts of violence against United Nations staff members, including the murder of a staff member of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees last month and the bombing of United Nations offices near Kandahar. Sporadic terrorist attacks are a searing reminder to the international community that Afghanistan was until just two years ago a safe abode for terrorists. We should therefore remain vigilant against terrorist actions by the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Factional fighting has had a turbulent place in Afghanistan's history and was a contributing factor in the past for plunging that nation into civil war and allowing it to become a terrorist haven. The current realities on the ground, as reflected by the report of the Security Council mission, show that factional fighting continues to result in heavy casualties. We believe that lessons of past experiences, as well as instances where the Afghan people have successfully achieved reconciliation at the community level, need to be recognized and acted upon, if the Afghan nation is to overcome its present instability and become a stable country.

In this regard, we are encouraged by the commitments expressed by factional leaders to the visiting Security Council mission concerning the

implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

We view the production and trafficking of narcotics in Afghanistan as a major source of instability. Given its link with terrorism, the increased drug production is of utmost concern. We recognize that there can be no prompt and easy solution to that problem. The difficulties of that question require progress on other fronts, including education, security, reconstruction as well as the effective functioning of the Central Government throughout Afghanistan.

We welcome Security Council resolution 1510 (2003), which, inter alia, authorizes expansion of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in areas of Afghanistan outside of Kabul and its environs. The expansion of its mandate will no doubt contribute to moving the Bonn process forward by promoting a more secure environment. We also appreciate the work being carried out by the provincial reconstruction teams, whereby security and reconstruction are being pursued simultaneously.

In the light of the fact that responsibility for security ultimately rests with the Afghan people, we welcome the various initiatives to expedite the development of the national police and the Afghan national army. The active participation of Afghan personnel in the security sector will promote a more stable environment for the convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga and the relevant electoral processes. Additionally, it will enhance the much-needed confidence of Afghan society in their capacity for self-rule.

Given the close linkages between peace, security and development, the rehabilitation and reconstruction process has been difficult to implement in the absence of a stable peace, but improvement in the security environment depends on the promotion of rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Hence, the sustained assistance of the international community is vital to meet those goals. At the same time, we firmly believe that the Afghan people have a wealth of talent, initiative and drive to develop their own county.

For its part, the Republic of Korea is strongly committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We have provided $12 million to alleviate the suffering of Afghan refugees and will provide up to $45 million through 2004. We have also dispatched medical units and engineering personnel to assist with the nation-building endeavours. My Government will continue to do everything in its capacity to help the Afghan people move forward.

For more than two decades, the people of Afghanistan were entrenched in a life of misery and lawlessness. Now, the future offers them hope, promise and optimism. International assistance will enable the Afghan people to restore stability and vitality to their society. However, it is of course up to the Afghan people themselves to determine their own future, especially in realizing a comprehensive peace, one that will endure for generations to come.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan. Tajikistan, which has always been among the sponsors of the resolution on this issue, believes the General Assembly's consideration of the situation in Afghanistan to be an important signal from the international community to the Afghan people. The Afghan society needs to know that the problems of peace-building in Afghanistan continue to be a top priority on the agenda of the world community, which must continue to support the peace process in that country. That is crucial precisely now, when Afghanistan has begun to tackle one of the major tasks of building its new society: the holding of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, which will strengthen State administration in the country, a prerequisite for creating a lasting, vital Government in a revived Afghanistan.

Given the disappointment of the Afghan participants at the talks because of the lack of a significant peace dividend and the lack of tangible assets, particularly in the provinces, it is important that the political consensus achieved by the Afghan parties in the Bonn Agreement not only be maintained but be demonstrated with greater force in order to achieve peace, national concordance and stability in the country.

As was the case two years ago, we are at a decisive moment in the history of this new post-Taliban Afghanistan. Clearly, if the peace process in Afghanistan is not protected, in particular by donor States, criminal and remnant Taliban elements will undermine the progress made.

With respect to resolving the urgent tasks in Iraq, we are still concerned at the possibility that

Afghanistan could be simply abandoned to its fate. It is not difficult to imagine the dangers that would arise if that kind of scenario unfolded in Afghanistan. Primarily, it would strengthen the forces of international terrorism and give them a serious asset for attracting into their ranks people who are disappointed at the efforts and capacity of the international community in Afghanistan. We should not forget that one in three of the world's 10 million refugees is Afghan. Reducing or ending assistance and rehabilitation programmes in Afghanistan on the pretext of donor fatigue or a lack of sufficient resources can only undermine faith in the international community and revive the forces of evil, which are simply biding their time after their crushing defeat.

Therefore today, as never before, Afghans need more than moral and political support — which is important, of course. Primarily, they need assistance in their daily struggle for survival. Success on the political front, like success in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan, including infrastructure and job creation projects, will ultimately be the key test of the peace process.

Tajikistan is actively involved in the humanitarian component of the comprehensive programme of assistance to the brotherly, neighbouring country of Afghanistan. At the same, I stress that my country's resources — both human and productive resources — can and should be more widely used in the rehabilitation projects going on in Afghanistan. My Government is prepared to do everything it can to ensure that Tajikistan continues to serve as a corridor for the delivery of food and other essential goods to Afghanistan.

Tajikistan believes that the implementation of the next stage of the Bonn Agreement — however important that is — should not be in itself the goal of the Afghan peace process. It is essential that implementation of each stage should lead to a restructuring of the very essence of the socio-economic bases of Afghan society after the many years of war. It is important that the Afghan people be rescued from the vicious circle of tragedy, poverty, conflict and violence. We hope that the Karzai administration, which the Government of Tajikistan fully supports, will defend the interests of ordinary Afghans.

We are convinced that the efforts of President Karzai, with the assistance of the international community, will ultimately, inter alia, put an end to the production and illegal trafficking of drugs. In Afghanistan today, unfortunately, we are witnessing a situation where the narcotics economy in Afghanistan is out of control. Opium production is depleting the resources of the country, is corrupting producers and significantly affecting consumer markets.

We must be blunt here. The problem of drugs of Afghan origin is an international problem. It follows that we all need to be involved in this. The fire of heroin, which continues to smoulder in the shards of the Taliban regime, poses a danger not only for the stable development of a new Afghanistan but also for the maintenance of international peace and security. That point was made at the special meeting the Security Council held in June.

During the terrible years of war against the Taliban regime, Tajikistan always sided with the Afghan people. The collapse of that anti-popular movement gave us all hope and optimism for the revival of Afghan society. Those hopes will be strengthened as Afghan groups refrain from confrontation, establish friendly relations among themselves and see one another as members of a single Afghan family. I am convinced that the time will come when the law of violence and weapons in Afghanistan will yield to the rule of law and tolerance.

At the same time, it is very important that other mistakes do not occur when changes are made — and in particular when changes are made in the armed forces and when seeking to establish balance in the representation of ethnic groups. We believe that using those very armed forces, which never betrayed the aspirations of the Afghan people to live in a civilized and democratic society, would be the best way of reflecting the aspirations of the Afghan people, who have suffered so much from the Taliban's medieval regime and at the hands of the international terrorists who were given free rein in that country. The experience of Tajikistan's armed forces in the area of post-conflict reform could serve as a model for the taking of balanced decisions in this regard.

It is important not merely to assess the positive peacekeeping experience of the United Nations in Afghanistan; it is now very important to critically look into peacekeeping in Afghanistan. In that regard, the President of Afghanistan's desire to convene an international conference to assess overall

implementation of the Bonn process should be fully supported. That conference could assess what has been done by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which has an important stabilizing role in that country. Tajikistan has always supported expanding the presence of the Force beyond Kabul.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Tajikistan fully abides by all the obligations entered into through the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, which was adopted on 22 December. We call upon all States to implement the Declaration's provisions and to assist in bringing about regional stability.

Finally, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Germany and his colleagues for the excellent job they did in preparing and introducing the draft resolution. Germany is one of the leaders in normalizing the situation in Afghanistan; Tajikistan is prepared to continue to cooperate with Germany and all interested parties in that regard.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Afghanistan has come a long way in the past two years. In the war against terror that came in the wake of the attacks of 11 September, the Taliban regime was removed, and its leaders are hiding in the rugged landscape of the country. Al-Qaeda has been significantly weakened, and its leaders are on the run. The Bonn process is helping the Afghan people to get back on their feet after nearly two decades of chaos and civil war. Kabul, by and large, is peaceful, and the Karzai Government has survived the heavy odds stacked against it. A decision has been taken to expand the scope of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside Kabul. The international community has allocated resources for the reconstruction of the war-torn country. A new, democratic constitution has been drafted, and preparations for general elections in 2004 are on course.

Those are indeed encouraging and welcome developments. Nepal congratulates President Karzai for his effective leadership, as well as the Afghan people for their wisdom and commitment to restore peace and normalcy. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General — Mr. Brahimi — and his team deserve our appreciation for the commendable work they have been doing in Afghanistan. Nepal also praises the world community for its support to help Afghanistan to move forward.

We must not, however, be complacent about developments, which have not yet become irreversible. Besides, there are other formidable challenges ahead. The Taliban is regrouping, and the warlords continue to defy Kabul. Demining is slow, as is the process of reconstruction and development. The world community has yet to make the security umbrella large enough, or to open its wallet wide enough, to create conditions to transform the institutions and infrastructure of Afghanistan in order to evolve the country into a vibrant, democratic and stable society. The persistent political uncertainty and sluggish reconstruction efforts will eventually frustrate the ordinary people of Afghanistan, who would like to get on with their lives. The prevailing insecurity will strengthen recidivist forces, which see chaos working to their advantage.

Afghanistan is close to our hearts in Nepal. The two nations, which share similar problems and prospects, have traditionally enjoyed warm and friendly relations. Nepal would like to see Afghanistan thrive to become a stable and prosperous nation, as well as to contribute to that process. That is why Nepal has, time and again, reiterated that Afghanistan needs security throughout its length and breadth, as well as resources to help its reconstruction and development. If security fails Afghanistan, development will not be possible; and if development fails, Afghanistan will not have durable peace. Therefore, if ISAF can provide the much-needed security, so be it. If not, the United Nations must swing into action and establish a United Nations peacekeeping operation in that nation without delay. Meanwhile, efforts should also be undertaken to expand and reinforce Afghan security forces.

Poverty, illiteracy and disease are pervasive in Afghanistan, as they are in so many other poor developing countries. Women suffer the worst from those ills, and entrenched discrimination against them is rife. As we have seen in the past, a poor and deprived Afghanistan could be its own worst enemy. But the implications of that will reverberate far beyond Afghanistan's borders.

If Afghanistan fails economically, the country will continue to lure terrorists and troublemakers, to generate restive refugees and to produce opium and the pain of addiction that will affect the entire world. Economic revitalization, as much as improved security, is critical to stabilize Afghanistan and strengthen its efforts to build a strong democracy. Alternative means of livelihood — including crop substitution — will be

essential to discourage people from poppy production in that country.

The international community must therefore help the Afghan people with a sense of urgency to deal not only with the humanitarian problems they now face. It must also assist them in climbing out of their unenviable social and economic conditions. Assistance from neighbouring countries, as much as from development partners, will be vital in that process. Helping Afghanistan is in the collective interest of the community of nations. We must be alive to that critical necessity.

Nepal supports the draft resolution introduced by Germany as a step in the right direction.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have thus heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 28 and sub-item (f) of agenda item 40.

I now invite the General Assembly to consider draft resolution A/58/L.32, which has two parts. Part A is entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", and part B is entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan".

I would like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.32, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Antigua and Barbuda, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Granada, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Vanuatu.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.32?

Draft resolution A/58/L.32 was adopted (resolution 58/27 A and B).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 28 and sub-item (f) of agenda item 40.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.